



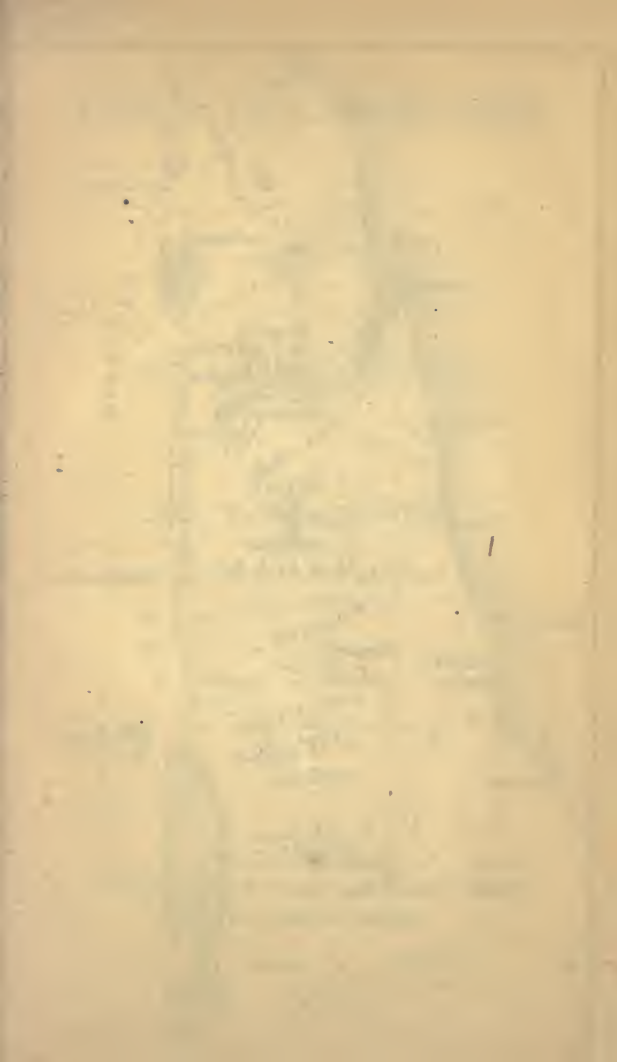
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B. 6285
JUDAS THE MACCABEE,

AND

THE ASMONEAN PRINCES.

William
BY
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AUTHOR OF

"THE EXILES OF MADEIRA," AND "THE
HOLY CHILD."

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

The dates mark the time when the Jewish high-priests and governors entered upon their offices, rather than the beginning of the reigns of the contemporary kings, who ruled over Judea. The five great foreign powers which held rule over Judea are noted in their successive order. For the sake of distinguishing in the Jewish offices, let g. stand for governor, h. for high-priest, and g. h. for the union of the two in one person.

DATE B. C.	JUDEA.	FOREIGN POWERS.
		PERSIA.
445	Nehemiah, g.	Artaxerxes Longimanus.
413	Joiadah, g. h.	Darius Nothus.
373	Johannan, g. h.	Artaxerxes Mnemon.
341	Jaddua, g. h.	Darius.
		MACEDONIAN EMPIRE.
332		Alexander the Great.
331	Onias, I., g. h.	
		EGYPT.
300	Simon the Just, g. h.	Ptolemy Soter.
291	Eleazar, g. h.	
276	Manasseh, g. h.	Ptolemy Philadelphus.
250	Onias II., g. h. with Joseph.	

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

DATE B. C.	JUDEA.	FOREIGN POWERS.
		SYRIA.
217	Simon II., g. h.	Antiochus the Great.
195	Onias III., g. h.	
175	Jason, g. h.	Antiochus Epiphanes.
172	Menelaus, g. h.	
	Judas Maccabeus, g. h. }	
163	Menelaus, h. }	
	Alcimus, h. }	
161	Jonathan, g. h.	Demetrius Soter.
143	Simon, g. h.	Alexander Balas.
		Demetrius Nicator.
	JUDEAN INDEPENDENCE.	
135	John Hyrcanus, g. h.	Antiochus Sidetes.
130	Judean Independence (regained).	
106	Aristobulus, g. h.	
105	Alexander Janneus, g. h.	
	Alexandra, g. }	
78	Aristobulus, II., h. }	
69	Aristobulus, II., g. h.	
63	Hyrcanus, g. h.	
		ROMAN DOMINION by Provincial generals. Pompey, Gabinius, Crassus, Julius Cæsar.
40	Antigonus, g. h.	Mark Antony.
37	{ Herod the Gr't, Sub-King	Appointed by the Romans.
	{ Aristobulius, h.	

JUDAS THE MACCABEE.

CHAPTER I.

BRIDGING THE CHASM.

B. C. 332—226.

THE Bible says nothing of Judas the Maccabee. Daniel prophesied of the times and the events which brought him into notice, but did not mention his name, nor refer to his patriotic deeds. The history of the Old Testament closes with Nehemiah, and its prophecy closes with Malachi. After them no "holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," until the days of our Lord. No inspired man wrote the history of the four hundred years, between Malachi and John the Baptist.

These were, however, times of great men

and wonderful events. Then Alexander rose to greatness by conquering the world. The Ptolemies flourished in Egypt. Demosthenes became the orator of Greece, and after him rose up Cicero at Rome. Plato and Aristotle lived and died, and Seneca the Roman moralist was born. Hannibal became famous out of Carthage, and Julius Cæsar marched victorious through Europe. Perhaps no equal length of time furnishes so much uninspired history as these four centuries, concerning which the Bible is almost silent. The prophecies, however, clearly prove that God still remembered the world.

The half of this period had passed away, when Judas the Maccabee was born. He had one noble ancestor, from whom the Jews were proud to reckon their lineage, and who is once mentioned in the first Book of the Chronicles (chap. xxiv.) This was Jehoiarib, the first of the twenty-four orders of priests. Josephus thought himself noble, because he was a descendant of this honourable man. Judas is recorded as the "son of Mattathias,

the son of John, the son of Simeon, the son of Asamoneus." From the latter came the family title of "the Asmoneans," by which they were known, until they were called "the Maccabees."

Judas, from his boyhood, must have heard many a story that thrilled his heart, and filled his soul with brave and patriotic resolutions. Of Samson, Gideon, Barak, and David, he must have heard, and perhaps he hoped for a day to come when God would perform through him some work like their deeds of deliverance. Also from the times of Asmoneus, there were heart-stirring accounts of events connected with the woes or the welfare of Jerusalem. These "tales of a grandfather" must have been often repeated in the house of Mattathias, while Judas sat wondering, and feeling in his heart the fire of love for his oppressed nation. Some of these we will try to relate, thus bridging the chasm between Nehemiah and the Maccabees.

Asmoneus dwelt in Jerusalem about the time that Josephus says Alexander the Great

visited that city. It was about three hundred and thirty-two years before Christ. Alexander was fighting against Tyre. At first he probably thought it would easily submit to him, but the city was strongly defended by an army sent there by Darius the king of Persia. The great conqueror began to be in need of more men, and more provisions. He sent messengers to Jerusalem, asking for supplies and for soldiers, assuring Jaddua the high-priest and governor, that the people would never be sorry for any favours bestowed upon him. Jaddua did not entertain the highest regard for the man, who was making himself such a terror to the world, and whose next request would probably be, that the Jewish people should cease to obey Darius, and come under the yoke of the conqueror. As he did not relish the invader's demands, he replied in his mild dignity, that he had already given his oath to Darius, that the Jews would not bear arms against any of his soldiers, and as some of them were defending Tyre, he could not aid those who were besieging it. He

would not violate his oath while Darius was in the land of the living.

Alexander was very angry at this reply. He had come to think that everybody should obey him. He threatened to march against Jerusalem, and teach all men, through its priest and people, to whom they must keep their oaths.

Jaddua heard the threat, but did not go to work to raise an army, nor to fortify the city. He sought the help of God. He told the people to join with him in offering sacrifices, and praying for protection and deliverance. It is said, that he had a dream, in which he was directed to take courage, adorn the city, and open the gates. The people should appear in white garments, and the priests should go in their official robes, to meet the conqueror, when he should come near to the city.

Alexander gained his victory over Tyre, and marched to Jerusalem. His soldiers were expecting to plunder the holy city, rob the temple, and put the high-priest to a cruel death. They were intent on revenge and

great spoils. But as they came near, a peaceful multitude, in festal array, met them. The sight of the venerable Jaddua, and of the noble men in his train, greatly affected the heart of Alexander. Certain kings who were with him were filled with wonder. Alexander came near and saluted the high-priest, by bowing before him, as if adoring the man whom he had despised and threatened. Some of his attendants supposed Alexander was deranged, for they had never known him pay such homage to any man.

“How is it,” one of them asked, “that when all others adore you, you should adore the high-priest of the Jews?”

“I did not adore him,” Alexander replied, “but that God who has honoured him with his high-priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, dressed in these garments, when I was at Dios.”

Then Alexander gave his hand to Jaddua, and was led into the city. He offered sacrifices in the temple, and was shown a prophecy of Daniel, declaring that the Persian Empire

should be overthrown by a Grecian king. Daniel viii. 2. This delighted him, for he supposed himself the person intended, and made him friendly to the Jewish people. The next day he told them to ask any favour they pleased. They requested that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might be freed from paying any tribute every seventh year, when the land was to keep her Sabbath. Lev. xxv. 3-7. This request was cheerfully granted. All other Jews whom he might find in Babylonia and Media were promised the same favours. And when Alexander declared that, if any of the people would enlist in his army, they might live according to their own customs, many were ready to follow him in his wars.

If Alexander did what is thus related of him, he did it only to gain power of the Jewish people. He perhaps invented and told the dream, to persuade them that he was greatly favoured of God. We find him soon after in Egypt, paying the same reverence to the abominable idols of that polluted land.

If he ever did engage in the worship of Jehovah in the temple, he was the more guilty in turning from it afterward, and in dying the death of one who could not conquer his own sinful habits.

Thus Jerusalem came under the power of Alexander the Great, B. C. 332. He did not send men into the country to rule over it, but left the high-priest to act as the governor; nor did he pass any decree to change or overthrow the religion of the people.

The names of the good men who have helped to preserve the Bible for us should never be lost. One of these men was Simon the Just, who did much to preserve the books of the Old Testament, and allow nothing to be added to them. From the time of Ezra, the great Synagogue carefully sought to select the sacred writings from all others, and keep them by themselves. After his death, B. C. 292, the Synagogue greatly declined, and wise and learned men seemed to fail the nation. He was the last one who settled the canon of the Old Testament. But after him arose a

class of rabbis who thought that the Scriptures were not a sufficient guide, and they added their opinions and traditions. These traditions grew through the ages, and were esteemed by many as of more account than any other writings. Our Lord found the Jews burdened with them, and showed clearly that the "traditions of the elders," were of no account. They did more harm than good. The Jews were ready to say, "the words of the scribes are lovely beyond the words of the law." But our Lord said to them, "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."* The Romanists have their traditions which they add to the Bible. We reject these, and claim that the Bible alone is the rule for the church, in all doctrine and practice. The Jewish traditions were written into one book, by Rabbi Judah the Holy, about one hundred and fifty years.

* Read Matt. xv., xxiii. Mark vii. Luke xii The word *tradition*, in 2 Thess. ii. 15 and iii. 6, does not refer to the false traditions of the scribes, but to the true Scriptures and teaching of the Apostle.

after Christ. This was called the Mishna. The commentaries upon this book are the Talmuds, held in great esteem among the Jews.

Now Simon the Just opposed all this system of error, from the very start, in his day. The Bible was enough, he thought, and he laboured to preserve all that was there written. The Jewish writers spoke of him with the most profound respect. They declared that his death was the beginning of peril and distress to the nation. The sacrifices did not seem so acceptable to God. The scape-goat, instead of leaping from a high rock and dashing itself to pieces, ran away into the desert. This was a fearful sign of calamity. The great west light of the golden chandelier no longer burned with a steady flame, and sometimes went out entirely. The fire on the altar languished, and the bread of the priests failed to be sufficient for their wants. In poetry his praises were recited :

He took care of the temple that it should not fall,
And fortified the city against besieging :

How was he honoured in the midst of the people,
In his coming from the house of the veil !
He was as the morning star in the midst of a cloud,
And as the moon at the full :
As the sun shining on the temple of the most High,
And as the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds,
And as the flower of roses in the spring of the year,
As lilies by the rivers of water,
And as the branches of the frank-incense tree
In the time of summer.
He stretched out his hand to the cup,
And poured of the blood of the grape ;
He poured out at the foot of the Altar,
A sweet-smelling savour unto the most High.
Then all the people together hasted,
And fell down to the earth on their faces
To worship their Lord God Almighty.

A pleasing story is told by a heathen writer, which illustrates the superstitions of the pagans, as well as the disbelief of the Jews in soothsaying. He says : "As I was travelling towards the Red Sea, there was in company with us a certain Jew named Mosollam, of a Jewish troop of horsemen, that was sent to be our convoy, a very valiant man, and remarkable for his great skill in archery, in which

he excelled even all the Greek and Barbarians of his time. As several of us were travelling on this journey together, a certain soothsayer, who took upon him to foretell the fortune of our journey bade us all stand still, and we did so. Whereon this Jew asked us what we stood for? Look ye, answered the cunning man, and he showed us a bird. If that bird stands, said he, ye are to stand, and if he rises and flies on, you are to go forward too; but if the bird takes its flight the contrary way, ye must all go back again. The Jew hereat, without speaking a word, let fly an arrow and killed the bird, whereon the soothsayer was very angry and fell to abusing him in most outrageous terms. Why, certainly, said the Jew, are ye not all mad, to make such a bustle about a foolish bird? How could the poor creature pretend to foreshow us our fortune, when it knew nothing of its own? If it could have foretold good or evil to come, it would have kept out of this place, for fear of being slain by the arrow of Mosollam the Jew!"

Heathen kings often used arrows in their divinations. The names of four or five cities were written on as many arrows, and these were put into a quiver. The one first drawn out, decided the city which they would first attack. This explains, probably, why the king of Babylon once selected Jerusalem as the first city against which he would march. "The king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way,—to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked into the liver. At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem." Ezek. xxi. 21. The Jews knew that Joseph and Daniel had utterly confounded all the arts of this superstitious craft, when they interpreted the future by the will of God.

After the death of Alexander the Great, the Jewish nation was like a lamb, with a lion on one side, and a wolf on the other. On the south was Egypt, over which reigned the Ptolemies, or the "kings of the south." On the north was the Syrian kingdom, under the Seleucidæ, or the "kings of the north."

Now one power, and now the other had rule over Judea, until the Romans gained possession of it, not long before Christ.

Asmoneus may have been in Jerusalem when Ptolemy Soter came with a great army and besieged it. The people were not willing to submit, on account of the oath they had taken, to serve Laomedon, who had received it from Alexander. When the Sabbath came, the Jews would not defend their walls, for they thought it very wrong to fight on that holy day; and the enemy took advantage of this, and easily became masters of the city. Josephus, however, says that Ptolemy pretended that he wished to offer sacrifices and worship God, and thus deceived the people, so that they allowed him to enter within the walls, and when once there, he would not return again to his tents. Ptolemy at first dealt very harshly with the Jews, but afterwards trusted them with great offices, because their religion made them honest men. He carried more than one hundred thousand captives into Egypt. Some of them, he settled in Cyrene.

We find Cyrenian Jews mentioned in the Bible. One Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry our Saviour's cross, on the way to Calvary. Certain men of Cyrene were afterward at Antioch "preaching the Lord Jesus." Acts xi. 20. Another teacher of the gospel was "Lucius of Cyrene." Acts xiii. 1.

It was about this time that the Old Testament was translated into Greek. The translation is called the Septuagint version, because there were said to be seventy (*septuaginta*) translators. The king of Egypt was anxious to have the largest library in the world, in his museum at Alexandria. He one day asked his librarian how many ten thousands of books there were already collected, and was told that there were about twenty times ten thousand, and there soon would be fifty times ten thousand. To this number the sacred books of the Jews were added, and if the king had only read them and obeyed them, he would have found that the Bible was the best book in all the library.

CHAPTER II.

BRIDGING THE CHASM.

B. C. 226—198.

TIMES OF SIMEON, GREAT-GRANDFATHER OF JUDAS.

ONIAS II. was the high-priest, and governor in Jerusalem. He was "one of a little soul, and a great lover of money." He had very little reason to complain of the king of Egypt, for the Jews had been treated with respect and kindness. Every year he was expected to pay to the king a tax of twenty talents of silver. He probably had this tax collected from his people, but he was so selfish and covetous that he had kept it for himself. At least no tax was paid to the king for several years, and a great sum was now due. As Onias could not be persuaded to send the tribute, the king threatened to send an army

and destroy the city, if the revenues were not soon paid. The people of Jerusalem were greatly alarmed, and knew not what to do.

In one of the country villages lived Joseph the nephew of Onias. A nobler young man could not be found in the land. He was not a noisy talker and boaster, ready to threaten war against the king who had declared such terrible things. He knew that the tax ought to be paid, and that it would be very foolish for the people to bring a war upon the city of David.

He came to his uncle Onias and tried to reason with him about the payment of the taxes. He told him that the people looked to him as their high-priest and protector: that if the king should fulfil his threats they would be plunged into useless war, and that they were too weak to defend their city and nation. He told him that if he was so great a lover of money, as to permit the ruin of his country, he should go to the king and ask him to free them from a part of the great debt which he claimed. But Onias was old and

covetous, and did not listen to the voice of reason. His reply was, that he did not care for the authority which the people had given him; if they did not like his government he was ready to surrender his office; and he would not go to the king nor trouble himself about such affairs. Joseph then asked for permission to go as an ambassador to the king, and try to settle these fearful troubles. This request was granted. He believed that "God loves good accounts."

Joseph then went to the temple and called together the people. He advised them not to be disturbed nor frightened. His plan was laid before them. They gladly approved it, and gave him many thanks.

Joseph then found the king's messenger, Athenion, and treated him with splendid hospitality, as long as he remained in the city. He also bestowed rich presents, and thus made it sure that when this messenger should return to Egypt, he would remember Joseph.

It was customary for certain men to apply to the king for the privilege of raising the

taxes in his provinces. They received a part of the taxes which they collected, and often made themselves rich by this office. This was called "farming the taxes." Men were willing to pay the king large money for this privilege. The office was put up at auction, and he who bid the highest obtained it. Certain bidders were on their way to Egypt, and were travelling in great pomp, as if they expected to collect from some poor people taxes enough to pay all expenses. One day a very plain man fell in their company. They began to laugh at him for his poverty and mean appearance. They little knew that his mind was intent upon something far more important than splendid equipage and luxurious entertainments. This man was Joseph, on his mission to the king. He allowed them to make all the sport of him they wished, and to imagine that he was an ignorant wanderer, too poor ever to gain any favours from a king. But while he appeared not to care for their ridicule, he was learning more of their intentions than they would have revealed, had they

understood who he was. He heard them tell each other how much they would pay for the farming of the taxes, how much they expected to collect, and how rich they would be made by the office. He held to only half the Jewish proverb, "In my own city my name will get me respect; in a strange city, my clothes."

When they reached Alexandria, they learned that the king was gone to Memphis. Joseph hastened on the way to that city, and met the royal chariot returning home. Athenion saw him, and told the king who he was. The king had heard so much good of Joseph, that he invited him to ride in the chariot with himself and the queen. The conduct of his uncle was explained. The people were defended from the charge of disobedience. Their cause was nobly advocated by their young representative. All difficulties were settled. The king was delighted to find so wise, so just, and so energetic a man as Joseph. He took him to his palace, as if he were a most intimate royal friend, and made him his guest so long as he remained in Alexandria.

Great was the anger of the men who had been making sport of Joseph all along the road, when they saw him thus honoured above themselves. They had mistaken their man. But they were destined to see much more, to make them envious and enraged. When they came to bid for the offices by which they expected to rob the people and enrich themselves, they found that their plain fellow-traveller had an eye upon them. They offered to collect the revenues of Judea, and the provinces adjoining for 8000 talents. Joseph had already learned from their own lips that the offices were worth twice as much. He accused them of having agreed together to defraud the king, and they could not deny it. Joseph then bid 16,000 talents for the office, if the king would grant him authority to make sure the collection of the taxes; promising to send the king all the property of those who forfeited their estates under his law. The king was pleased with this noble offer, for it not only proved that the bidder was an honest man, but it would add greatly to his treasury.

Yet he doubted the ability of Joseph to make good his proposal, and asking him, "Where are your sureties for the payment of the money," he replied, "I will give you the sureties of persons good and responsible, whom you will not mistrust." "Name them," said the king. "I will give thee no other persons," replied Joseph, "for my sureties, than thyself, and this thy queen, and you shall be security for both parties." The king smiled at the ingenious answer, and granted him the farming of the taxes, with no other bonds than his own word. This was a sore grief to those who had despised Joseph, and they returned home disappointed, and ashamed, with less extravagance on the way, no doubt, than upon the merry journey into Egypt, as the Jews say, "they had thought to put others in a sleeve and are put in themselves."

It is said that Joseph "brought the Jews out of a state of poverty and contempt, into one that was more happy at home, and honourable abroad." The king to whom he was subject was Ptolemy Euergetes (the Bene-

factor,) who reigned twenty-five years. He was the last king of Egypt who governed himself with any moderation, or ruled his people with energy and justice. His successors were selfish men, who gave themselves over to the indulgence of vice and luxury. His son is supposed to have poisoned his own father, and yet he called himself Philopater—the father-lover!

Ptolemy Philopater once visited Jerusalem. On his arrival he went into the outer court of the temple, and there had sacrifices offered for him, to the God of Israel. He made many costly gifts, to enrich and adorn it. He wished to enter the Sanctuary, and even the Holy of Holies. The people were struck with horror at the thought of such profanation. The high-priest told him of the law which forbade such an entrance. But this did not satisfy him. The priests and Levites gathered together to hinder it; the people lifted up their hands to avert it, but he seemed only the more determined. He pressed into the inner court, but before he reached the holy

place, it is said that he was smitten with great confusion of mind, and was carried out half dead. Recovering from this judgment of God, he left Jerusalem in anger, threatening to deal severely with the Jews for what had occurred to him. He treated the Jews of Egypt with injustice and cruelty. This made the people of Judea quite willing to be conquered by another power, when the time should come. And yet as they looked toward the "kings of the north," for help, it was with them as "if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him." Amos v. 19.

Often had the "kings of the north" grasped for the possession of Jerusalem, but they had failed to secure the coveted prize. At last Antiochus the Great brought it under his power. He had learned that the people were anxious for some favourable change in their government. So he gave them an opportunity to acknowledge him as their king. On his approach to Jerusalem, the priests and elders went out in solemn procession to meet him. They escorted him and all his army

into the city, and entertained them as if their best friends had all come at once to visit them. Thus Antiochus the Great became their king. In a letter which he soon after sent to the commander whom he placed over the city, he gave orders like these:—

“ The Jews, on our first entrance into their country, showed their friendship toward us. When we came to their city, they received us in a splendid manner, and came to meet us with their senate. They gave abundance of provisions to our soldiers, to our horses and elephants. They helped us to drive out the garrison of Egyptians that were in the citadel. We therefore think it proper to reward them, and to assist them in restoring their city to its former glory, so that many of their people will return, who are now scattered among the nations. We therefore first grant them money for their sacrifices, wheat and salt. We order the work about the temple to be finished. Let the nation live according to their own laws. And in order to win back the Jews who are exiled from their native land, we release them

from taxes for three years, after which their taxes shall be one-third less than were paid to Egypt. Those who have been carried away and are now slaves, shall be free, and to those who have lost property by their former government, it shall be restored."

In other countries, Antiochus the Great put Jews in the castles and important places of defence. The reason which he gave was this: "I am persuaded that they will be well-disposed guardians of our possessions, because of their piety toward God, and because my predecessors have been witnesses to them that they are faithful, and do with promptness whatever they are required to perform. Thou shalt give every one of their families a place for building a house, for planting a vineyard, and for raising grain. They shall pay no taxes on their fruits for ten years." All this shows that the Jews were an honest and pious people. They could be trusted with important interests. Their religion gave them this character. We have often seen wicked men employing Christians to manage their

affairs, because their religion made them honest and faithful. They would not deceive, nor defraud, nor betray those who employed them.

Thus far the Jews are the better for the change of emperors. The bear has not yet met them. Under no foreign ruler were they ever more prosperous. But this was only the mockery of Syria toward them. It was the calm before a terrible storm. Their suspicions were lulled, and when off their guard the strong man came upon them armed. But of such royal promises it cannot always be said, as the Jewish poet says of the bright token of God's mercy: "Look upon the rainbow and praise him that made it; very beautiful is it in the brightness thereof. It compasseth the heaven about with a glorious circle: and the hands of the most High have bended it."

CHAPTER III.

THE WAY OF THE WICKED.

B. C. 190—174.

As we now come to the times of Judas the Maccabee, we shall introduce another of the “kings of the north.” He was a son of Antiochus the Great, and called himself Antiochus Epiphanes, or the *Illustrious*; but others called him Antiochus Epimanes, or the *Furious*. Which name he most deserved, let his life declare. We first hear of him when he was sent to Rome as a hostage. His father had been defeated in his war with the Romans, and forced to make a treaty of peace. Among other conditions, he must pay the Romans a large tax every year, and must give certain persons over to be kept by them as hostages. It was as if he said, “We will pay

the taxes so long as you treat our hostages kindly ;” and they said, “ we will treat these persons well, so long as you pay the taxes.” The father thus gave up his son, to be kept, for years, in the hands of the Romans. Kings do not always love their sons, and we shall see that princely brothers are not always free from treachery.

Seleucus was the older brother of young Antiochus, and was king after his father’s death. The best act recorded of him was the payment of money to the Jews for their temple, and for the support of its worship, as his father had done before him. But he was still obliged to pay the heavy taxes to the Romans. If he should not pay them, his brother would certainly suffer for it. He needed money, and was willing to rob temples and cities in order to obtain it. And now comes the report of his act of great wickedness towards Jerusalem.

The Jewish people were at peace, and “ the laws were kept very well, because of the godliness of Onias the high-priest, and his

hatred of wickedness." But there was a traitor in the city,—one Simon, the ruler of the temple. He had a spite against the high-priest, and went to the court of Seleucus, and informed his officers that there were immense treasures of money in the temple, which the king could seize at his will. The temptation was too great for the king to resist. He sent Heliodorus, his treasurer, to Jerusalem with orders to bring away the treasures.

The high-priest gave welcome to the king's messenger, and honoured him with the best entertainment he could afford. Heliodorus told him his errand, and asked if there was so much treasure in the temple. He was told that the money did not belong to the temple. It was deposited there in trust for the support of widows and orphans. The poor would need it, nor would the kind donors be willing to have it taken away. But the messenger insisted on carrying it to his king.

It was not long before the report spread through the city, that the temple was about

to be robbed of all the money laid up for the orphans and the widows. The people were seized with terror. They flocked together in crowds and prayed the Lord that the holy place might not be so profaned. Some ran to the walls, and some were found looking out of the windows of their houses to see what would take place. The priests, dressed in their robes of office, fell at the foot of the altar, imploring the mercy of God. "Then whoso had looked the high-priest in the face, it would have wounded his heart; for his countenance and the changing of his colour declared the inward agony of his mind." This Onias was a much better man than the uncle of Joseph.

Heliodorus, with his guards, came to the gate of the treasury, and was about to break it open. Then, it is said, God interfered and prevented him from executing his base designs. We are not ready to believe that he saw a horse richly caparisoned, which suddenly rushed upon him and struck him several times with his fore-feet; and also saw a man,

sitting on the horse, who had a fierce countenance and arms of gold. Nor do we think that two young men, whose beauty dazzled the eye, stood, one on each side of Heliodorus, and scourged him with great violence. Such wonders are not like the miracles of the Bible. We think, however, that something strange may have occurred to this messenger, to prevent his daring robbery. It seems that he left the treasures in the temple and went home much more humbled than he came. He told king Seleucus, it is said, that if he had an enemy or traitor whom he wished to punish, to send him to Jerusalem for the money; for God dwelt in the holy place, and would destroy those who entered it to commit an injury. The king was soon to be betrayed by this messenger.

Seleucus needed the help of his brother Antiochus, and sent for him to return home. But the Romans were not willing to deliver up so important a hostage, unless some other prince were sent to take his place. So the king sent Demetrius, his own son, to be a

hostage, and Antiochus left Rome. On the way home he visited Athens, and there heard the most startling news. His brother, the king, was dead. Heliodorus had turned traitor, poisoned the king, and seized on the throne. Perhaps Antiochus was not very deeply grieved. He obtained the help of other kings, and was enabled to conquer the usurper, and take the rule over the kingdom.

The prophet Daniel seems to call Antiochus a *vile person*. He soon began to prove the truth of this description. He was living at Antioch,* when king of Syria. He would lay aside his royal dignity, and wander about the streets like a fool or a madman. He was often drunk, and associated with the most wicked companions. He loved to be with actors and

* This city is often mentioned in the New Testament. It was named after Antiochus the Great, and built by his son. The pride of this family ran toward building cities and giving their own names to them. There were 9 Seleucias, 16 Antiochs, and Laodiceas. At Antioch poets have spent their days, emperors died there, and great generals made it their gate to the East. "The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch."

stage-players, better than with wise and good men, not caring to know that "the companion of fools shall be destroyed." Sometimes he would gather together a heap of stones and pelt people as they passed along the streets. Again he would take money and scatter it by handfuls among the crowd of people, crying out, "Let him take, to whom fortune gives it." Sometimes he would go out with a crown of roses on his head, and wearing a Roman gown, and insult those whom he met on the streets: or he would pretend that he was trying to get votes for an office, as he had seen men do in Rome, and afterward would take his chair and *play Judge* in the market-places. He certainly, then, was a *vile person*; nor need we be surprised that he acted wickedly towards the Jewish people.

The high-priest at this time bore the common name of Onias. He had already seen much trouble, and was destined to see much more. His brother Jason proved a traitor, and "laboured underhand to be high-priest." He went to Antiochus and offered him large

sums of money, if the king would rob Onias of his office and give it to him. Hence Onias was brought to Antioch, and kept there, so that he could have no influence with his people, and Jason was made high-priest and governor over Jerusalem. He became one of the worst rulers the Jews ever had over them. He began to train the youth in the "fashions of the heathen," for which a residence at Rome had increased his ardent affection. He built a place of exercise or play, close by the temple, where the vilest games were performed. Every thing must be after the style of the Greeks. He made the young men wear a hat, just to give them the appearance of Greeks. Before this time they probably had worn a turban, and the only harm in a hat was that it was then a mark of idolatry.*

* The Jews lost their love for idolatry in their severe captivity at Babylon, or were so cautioned against it after their return, that they resisted the temptations of their neighbours. Prideaux thinks the reason to be that they had synagogues throughout the land, and had the law and the prophets read to them every week. But the people had the Levites among them before the cap-

The people were taught to call themselves Antiochians. The worshippers of God saw all this with the deepest grief. They felt very much as Christians now would feel, if they saw theatres supported and churches abandoned. The priests too were grieved when they saw the temple forsaken, and the people so intent on the follies of the heathen. Many of them offered no more sacrifices, despised the holy place, and followed those who sought foolish and wicked amusement instead of the true worship of the living God.

Jason also took money out of the temple treasury, and sent it to pay for sacrifices to the heathen God Hercules; but the messengers, thinking this a great sin, applied the money to some better purposes. And when any of the chief men among the heathen came to Jerusalem he made a great display in re-

tivity, and also the prophets, and "sons of the prophets," to teach them. No doubt, their sad experience of idols, had taught them a lesson never to be forgotten. Never since have the Jews been idolaters.

ceiving them, so that the city might appear to be wholly given to idolatry.

Jason was soon to be outwitted just as he had outwitted others. He sent one of his brothers, who had taken the Greek name of Menelaus, to king Antiochus to pay the yearly price, which Jason had agreed to pay for his office. Menelaus then bid more for the office than his brother had paid, and the king sold it to him. How low and shameful was the condition of the Jews, when the office of high-priest was put up at auction and sold to the highest bidder! When Menelaus cast Jason down and took his place, he found no money in the treasury. And yet he must have money to pay his king. So he committed new outrages on the temple. He secretly took away the golden vessels and sold them in Tyre. This roused the zeal of Onias, and he publicly denounced the plunderer before the court at Antioch. He tried to excite the king to avenge the outrage. But his words were in vain, so long as Menelaus could bribe the officers of the Syrian court with gold. Onias

fled to a refuge, but was slain by an assassin sent to destroy him. Menelaus thus silenced one whom he feared, but others were only the more enraged, and rose up against him, destroying another of his brothers, who was leading an army of three thousand men. When certain ones were going to Tyre to meet Antiochus to make complaints to him against their wicked high-priest, he engaged one Ptolemy Macron to plead for him, who contrived to have the ambassadors murdered. The Tyrians pitied the dead messengers and gave them an honourable burial.

Where were the people, among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who still loved God, and sought to worship him? Were they all driven away? Had all adopted the heathen idolatries and the Grecian customs? Truly we might despair of finding any who remained faithful to the Lord, were there not, soon to appear, the father and the brothers of Judas the Maccabee.

CHAPTER IV.

OUTRAGES IN JERUSALEM.

B. C. 174—167

A REPORT was circulated in Jerusalem that Antiochus was killed while fighting to conquer Egypt. The Jews were not very mournful on that account, for they were learning that this "king of the north" would soon become exceedingly oppressive. Jason then thought it a fit time for him to drive out Menelaus, and regain his lost office. He marched to the city with a thousand men, took possession, expelled his rival, and exercised the worst cruelties toward the people. He put many to death without mercy.

Antiochus was not dead. He heard of the rejoicings of the people, when they were told that he was killed, and was greatly

provoked. He supposed that the whole Jewish nation had revolted from him. He marched against the holy city, and besieged it. The people were forced to yield to him. He then put to death, in three days, forty thousand of them, and taking as many more captives, he sold them for slaves to the neighbouring nations. He entered the temple, went into every part of it, however sacred, and polluted it with every sort of heathen violence. Menelaus was his guide. He took one of the meanest swine and offered the forbidden animal, which the Jews still hate, as a sacrifice upon the altar of burnt-offering. He took the tables, altars, candlesticks, and vessels, which were made of gold, from the temple. He also plundered the city. Then he appointed a cruel and barbarous man governor of Judea, and gave to Menelaus again the office of high-priest. These were great insults to the Jews. Jason went into exile, led a wandering life, and died at length unpitied and despised. The way of this transgressor was hard.

Two years of woe slowly passed away in Jerusalem. The people knew not what to expect, until a new vial of wrath was poured out upon them. Antiochus was very angry because he could not manage Egypt to suit himself. Then he began to vent his rage against the Jews, who had in no way offended him. He must fight somebody, and he could wage war against the Jews more easily than against any other nation. He issued an edict for the extermination of the Hebrew race, and sent Apollonius to execute it in as hasty a manner as possible. This officer marched to Jerusalem with twenty-two thousand men, and settled quietly down before the gates.

The people had grown weary of the heathen customs which Jason had taught them a few years before, and had returned to the observance of the Sabbath, and the worship of the temple. They saw the army before their gates, but were not willing to fight on the Sabbath-day. They assembled in their synagogues, and gathered about their sacred altars. Indeed they supposed there was no cause for

alarm; for Apollonius had declared that he did not come to make war upon their city. But just when they were peaceably at worship, this "detestable ringleader" let loose his soldiers to ravage, plunder, and slay whomsoever they pleased. They rushed upon the unresisting multitudes, slew the men, seized the women and children as slaves, and filled the streets with blood. It was a Sabbath of horrors through all the city. The most heartless robberies were committed. Houses were plundered, and then pulled down or set on fire. In many places the city walls were broken down, and all the glory of the city of David was defaced. The enemy took the ruins upon Mount Zion, and built a strong citadel, which for long years was a trouble to the worshippers of God, for it stood near the temple. Soldiers were placed in it, who should annoy any of the people that came back secretly to look upon the desolation, or to steal in among the ruins, in search of some relic which they loved, or some friend they had lost.

Still some of the Jews lingered in the city. They loved the homes in which their fathers had dwelt, and the holy places where they had worshipped the living God. Their love for Jerusalem made them brave. One by one they came from their hiding-places, and began to hope for a day of peace. They made the desolate streets appear as much like home as they could, and attempted to repair their places of worship. But the persecution was not ended. The reign of terror had but fairly begun.

Antiochus decreed that all the nations over whom he ruled, should put away their religions, and conform to the idolatry of the king. He was determined to compel the Jews to worship false gods. Against them his anger burned, and his edicts were levelled. He wished to sweep out the Jewish nation, and blot out their name and their religion. Why he thus hated them no one can tell.

Judas the Maccabee was in Jerusalem about this time. He saw no hope of defence if he remained in the city. He could not collect

an army unless he should retreat into the country, and take time to gather them into one place where soldiers could be trained for the battle.

Hence he and his companions fled into the wilderness, and there lived in great hardship for many weeks. They kept themselves alive upon herbs and wild fruits, until they found a refuge at the small town of Modin. It may be that his father's family had dwelt in Jerusalem until thus driven away by these horrors of the persecution. When the wolf has the fold, the sheep must fly to the forest. Some who sought refuge in caves were dragged forth by the prowling foe and put to death.

An old man named Atheneus was sent to Jerusalem to introduce the heathen customs among those who still remained faithful to Jehovah. Who could abide such a missionary of wickedness? The temple yet stood, and he taught them to call it the temple of Jupiter Olympius. It was greatly profaned, and made the scene of some of the most abominable

crimes. It was "filled with the riot and revelling of the heathen." The altars were desecrated. It was declared a crime for any one to keep the Sabbath, or the ancient feasts, or to profess himself a Jew. The feast of Bacchus, the god of drunkenness, was celebrated, and on the day of this wicked revelling the Jews were compelled to wear ivy, which was the emblem of this idol god. They were forced to join in the riotous procession, when Bacchus was worshipped. Death was the punishment for not submitting to these abominations.

There were two women in the city who had dedicated their children to the Lord, as their fathers had done in happier days. The persecutors hung these children to the necks of their mothers, and after leading them through the city, they took them to the steepest walls, and cast them, and all who had been associated with them, down headlong, to be suddenly killed, or to be wounded and die a slow death, where no one could visit them in their last hours.

✕ The cruelties inflicted upon the Jews were too horrible for the pen to record. Tradition has preserved but a hint of the most barbarous. Many a tongue dwelt with honest pride on the faith and courage of some of the sufferers. Among them was Eleazar, an aged scribe, ninety years old, who would not eat forbidden flesh, nor attend the heathen feasts. His enemies even forced open his teeth, but he still resisted them, resolved to die rather than eat of things sacrificed to idols. They told him to bring such food as he chose and eat with them as if he were joining them in their idolatries; that by a deception he might persuade others to conform to their customs, and save his own life. But he had been educated, from a child, to be honest, and not deceive by word or deed. He told them that he would rather die than prove false to the just and holy laws of God. "For it does not become one of my age," said he, "to dissemble in any manner, for then many young persons would think that Eleazar, being ninety years old, had gone over to a

strange religion. This would deceive them, so that in order to live a little longer, they would commit this wickedness. And even if I should escape the punishment of men, yet I could not escape the hand of the Almighty. Wherefore, now, manfully changing this life, I will show myself such an one as my age requires, and leave a notable example to the young, to die willingly and courageously for the honourable and holy laws." Soon after this he was led to the torment, and died a martyr for that religion which was his support to the last. There were young men to be comforted by his words, and made strong for awful endurance.

A mother and her seven sons were arrested, because they refused to eat swine's flesh and things offered to idols. The oldest son asked, "What would you learn of us? We are ready to die rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers."

But they tortured him all the more. The mode of his death was too horrible to be related. The second son was tortured and

then asked if he^e would not eat. He boldly answered "No!" He was killed by a slow death, and when at the last gasp, he said to his persecutor, "Thou, like a fury, takest us out of this present life, but the King of the world shall raise us, who die for his laws, into everlasting life." Another son while dying exclaimed, "It is good, being put to death by man, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by him." Another said, "Thou hast power over men, thou art corruptible, thou doest what thou wilt: yet think not that our nation is forsaken of God." "The mother was marvellous above all, and worthy of honourable memory; for when she saw her seven sons slain in one day, she bore it with a good courage, because she had hope in the Lord." She exhorted every one of them to be strong of heart. The persecutor offered to make her youngest son both rich and happy if he would forsake the laws of his fathers, but the young man scorned the offer of such friendship. And his mother said to him, "Fear not this tormentor: but,

being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy with them." He was tormented more than the others, if such a thing were possible, but he died undefiled and put his whole trust in the Lord. Then the mother was put to death. "Let this be enough," says the ancient historian, "now to have spoken concerning the idolatrous feasts and the extreme tortures."

These sufferers were but the lesser stars which the dark night of persecution brought into notice. They were a few out of hundreds, who, no doubt, were martyrs to a holy religion. Where so many were brave to suffer, some would become brave in noble deeds. The zeal of Antiochus for "Grecian manners, Grecian arts, Grecian vices, and Grecian idolatry," was carried so far that it roused up stout hearts to resist these evils, and expel those who had enticed the people to ruin. It again united the "true patriot with the devout worshipper." In a little town among the mountains dwells a family who will rise up and defend their altars, their homes, their

church, and their nation. They have had patience, and have waited for their time to come, when they could fire their nation's heart with patriotism, and lead her hosts to victory. In their silence they have grown strong. The "hidden ones" of the Lord will come forth at their call, from the ruins of the land, and from the forests and mountains, and deeds still be performed well worthy of historic praise. It will now be seen that there are yet seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Grecian idolatry. We turn then with interest to a "family, apparently little known beyond their own town, which owed all its celebrity to their future pious and heroic deeds, rescued a nation from thralldom, and exalted it once more among the mightiest nations."

CHAPTER V.

OUT OF WEAKNESS MADE STRONG.

B. C. 167—166.

MODIN seems to have been a little city set on a hill, whose light could not be hid. It was in the tribe of Dan, between Joppa and Jerusalem. Many of the Jews whom Antiochus drove into secret places, found a refuge in its neighbourhood. Many priests found there a hiding-place.

Mattathias, or, as we shall call him, Matthias, came from Jerusalem during these stormy days, and dwelt in Modin. We have already referred to his noble ancestry. He had five sons, who were each to have an excellent name in history; John, Simon, Judas (the Maccabee), Eleazer, and Jonathan. These young men had not been led to a heathen

altar to swear eternal enmity against the Syrians, but they had been taught at the altar of Jehovah undying allegiance to the God of Israel. A part of Jewish education was a lofty patriotism, inspired by the word of the Lord.

✓ Matthias wept, like Jeremiah, over the sorrows of Jerusalem, for she had become as a widow, weeping sore in the night, and with the tears still on her cheeks at the morning dawn. From the daughter of Zion all the beauty had departed, her adversaries saw her and did mock at her Sabbaths. The aged priest at Modin uttered his sorrows: "Woe is me! wherefore was I born to see this misery of my people, and of the holy city, and to dwell there when it was delivered into the hand of the enemy, and the sanctuary into the hand of strangers? Her temple is become as a man without glory. Her glorious vessels are carried away, her infants are slain in the streets, her young men by the sword of the enemy. What nation hath not had a part in her kingdom and gotten of her spoils? All

her ornaments are taken away : the free woman has become a bond slave. And behold ! our sanctuary, even our beauty and our glory, is laid waste, and the heathen have profaned it. To what end therefore shall we live any longer ?”

The old man was almost in despair of any relief to his people. He knew that they had sinned, and their fathers had been transgressors of the laws to which God required the most strict obedience. Like Ezra and Daniel he confessed the sins of his people, and prayed the Lord to send help from on high. He and his sons rent their clothes, put on sackcloth, fasted, and mourned. ✓

One day there came to Modin a strange company of men, led by Apelles, an officer of king Antiochus. They came to execute the king's decree, that the Jews must renounce their religion or suffer death. Their object was to bribe those who would sell themselves to idolatry, frighten those who were timid into heathenism, and compel even the bravest men to offer heathen sacrifices on the altar

which they built, and surmounted with an idol.

Apelles learned that Matthias was a man of great influence in the town. Calling him and his sons together, he made splendid offers to him, and, as he imagined, a very flattering speech. "Thou art a ruler, and an honourable and, great man in this city, and art strengthened with sons and brethren: now, therefore, come thou first, and fulfil the king's commandment, like as all the heathen have done, yea, and the men of Judah also, and such as remain in Jerusalem; so shalt thou and thy children be in the number of the king's friends, and thou and thy children shall be honoured with silver and gold, and many rewards."

But Apelles had met a man who was too old to be flattered, and too noble to be bribed. Such a speech was but a waste of words. He had no respect for the king's commandment, when it required the basest submission to crime. He cared not to be among the king's friends, if he must become first a traitor to

his country, and a rebel against God. The heathen were no example for him, nor were false and treacherous Jews, nor could gold buy his soul nor his liberty. He therefore replied in a brave and eloquent speech, speaking with a loud voice, so that all his friends might hear, and that his foes might be assured that he was not frightened by their arrogance: "Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away, every one, from the religion of their fathers, and give consent to his commandments; yet will I, and my sons, and my brethren, walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances. We will not hearken to the king's words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand or the left."

There was, however, one traitor in the town. He was a Jew, who came forward before the people, and attempted to offer a heathen sacrifice on the new altar. So impious an act deserved the severe punishment of death. Matthias was struck with astonish-

ment, and trembled with indignation. His zeal was set on fire. Running to the altar he smote the traitor dead. He then slew Apelles, and pulled down the altar.

Then the old man proved himself the hero of the day. He cried through the streets of Modin, with a loud voice; "Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me."

Matthias and his sons fled to the mountains. Many who were still devoted to the true worship of God, followed, taking with them their wives, their children, and their cattle. The multitude rapidly increased. "They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." None of us have ever passed through such trials, nor do we know how precious the religion of God is to a people thus persecuted and afflicted. These invaders were desperate men, banded together to resist the just laws of the land, and sallying forth from their retreats to make plunder upon the fields and villages around them. The others were men

of faith and prayer—men who would rather suffer than to violate the Sabbath, or lift a hand against any human being unless compelled in defence of their holy religion.

An army was sent by the king, to hunt these people, and bring them to his terms of submission. Syrian troops went into the secret places of the wilderness, and pursued these refugees until a large company of them were driven into a cave. One thousand of them were there hidden in the darkness. The Sabbath came. The soldiers knew that the Jews would not fight on that day. They pitched tent at the mouth of the cave. They invited the defenceless people to come and offer the heathen sacrifices, and be pardoned. They proposed to be very merciful. But the Jews answered, "We will not come forth, neither will we do the king's commandments, to profane the Sabbath-day."

The soldiers then made battle with all haste. No mercy was shown to any, from the youngest babe to the oldest patriarch. But these refugees would not fight on the Sabbath.

They did not stop the mouth of the cave, nor cast a stone at their enemies and murderers. They said, "Let us die in our innocence; heaven and earth shall testify for us, that ye put us to death wrongfully."

These people were nearly all slain in heathen cruelty. Matthias and his friends saw that if they did not defend themselves on the Sabbath, they would soon be utterly destroyed. Hence they resolved to resist their foes, if attacked on that sacred day. They never seem afterward, to have made an attack upon the Sabbath.

Brave men flocked in from all quarters of the land. It seemed as if some had been hiding in every valley and mountain, growing more courageous by endurance, and more patriotic as they learned that all their hope was in God. The old man's heart leaped for joy, and he seemed to be on fire with the zeal of youth. Among those who came to join his ranks were the Assideans, a sect of Jews who were exceedingly zealous for the law and the covenant. They were mighty men of valour.

From them, are supposed to have sprung the Pharisees of a later day. These Assideans were just the men Matthias wanted to strengthen his forces. Thus grew up an army.

These warriors were fighting for all that was dear to their own hearts, or of any value to the nation, or to the church. They began their work in earnest. They came from their mountain fortresses, and poured down upon the towns, destroying heathen altars, enforcing the law of God, punishing traitors, and recovering many copies of the Old Testament which their enemies had wantonly defaced. They re-established the synagogues where they had been perverted to profane uses, and restored the worship of Jehovah wherever they went. They were truly Reformers, employing that best sword, the word of the Lord.

Their success was wonderful: for they were feeble compared with the enemy. They had not so skilful weapons, nor so many warriors, trained to the business of making battle. But they were in downright earnest. Antiochus

too regarded them with contempt. He and his officers thought them to be a poor, weak, degraded, superstitious people, too cowardly to make much resistance. They thought, that because the Jews were stripped of their wealth, all their courage had departed. The king looked on them only as mean slaves, whose vigour was crushed out of them, and destined to writhe under the chains which he had placed upon them. After the victory over the thousand put to death in the cave, he proudly celebrated his joy in the manner of the heathen conquerors, supposing that the Jews would be captivated with his generous pride and pomp. He appointed a time for a great display of the Grecian games, and invited a vast multitude to witness them. He expended immense sums of money to make them astonishingly grand.

The day came, and many people assembled. The king in his vanity revealed his utter insignificance. His behaviour was unnatural and indecent. He made himself a laughing-stock, or excited the disgust of all who be-

lieved that kings should be well-behaved and reasonable men. After a few such actions, those who respected modesty and dignity refused the invitations to his feasts. Thus the king was playing the buffoon, and while he was despising the Jews, their noblest men were gaining strength for victories over his forces.

The wise Matthias was too old to bear the toils of warfare, and the exposures of camp life. His health began to fail. He had started the reformation; his trusty sons were able to carry it forward with calmness and success. When he knew that his death was near, he called his sons, and reminded them of the brave deeds of Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, Caleb, and the most faithful of heroes down to Daniel. "Thus consider ye," said the old man, "that throughout all ages none that put their trust in God shall be overcome. Be valiant, and show yourselves men in behalf of the law. Behold! I know that your brother Simon is a man of wise counsel; give ear always unto him; he will be a father to

you. As for Judas Maccabeus, he hath been mighty and strong even from his youth up; let him be your captain, and fight the battle of the people." It is said that Matthias was one hundred and forty-six years old when he died; a statement however that does not seem clearly established. His name had become such a terror to his foes that when his body was taken to Modin for burial, no one made any resistance. All Israel made great lamentation for him.

Judas seems to have been a vigorous and brave boy, and now appears as the prudent man, and the hero of Judea. His banner is said to have borne certain strange letters, very mysterious to the heathen, and very inspiring to the Jews who understood them. They were M. C. K. B. I. They were the first letters of the Hebrew words, which mean, "Who is like unto thee among the gods, O Jehovah?" Exodus xv. 11. By throwing these letters into one word, the name Mackabi is found, and this becomes Maccabees. No doubt the title was at first

applied to Judas especially, and afterward to all his brothers, and indeed to all who were associated with them in their struggles for liberty.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRUSTY SWORD.

B. C. 166—165.

JUDAS was in need of a good sword, and the king was the man to supply him with one. Antiochus was glad to send Apollonius with an army of Samaritans, against the leader of the Jews. Judas met him, conquered his army, slew their general, and took his sword as a trophy of the victory. This sword he ever after used in battle, and literally fought the enemy with his own weapon.

This defeat greatly annoyed the king. He could scarcely believe that a band of despised patriots had grown so powerful. Then Seron took the field. If his power had been equal to his boasting he would have proved a terrific enemy; for he said, "I will get me a name

and honour in the kingdom, for I will fight with Judas and them that are with him, who despise the king's commandment." He went up with a "mighty host of the ungodly to help him." He came near to a celebrated battle-field, where Joshua drove the Amorites before him, and "chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon." Judas was on the watch for these invaders, and, very probably, he went up, like Joshua, suddenly, and marched all night. He had with him but a small company of men. His few soldiers were afraid, when they saw the host coming to meet them. They asked their leader, "How shall we be able, being so few, to fight against so great a multitude, and so strong an army, seeing that we are ready to faint with fasting all this day?" It is no wonder they were hungry, for the people around them were not willing to supply them with provisions. They had not money to buy food in large quantities, for when they fled to the mountains for refuge, they left their property unsold behind them. They felt little courage to

fight. But Judas took a different view of the case. He remembered what the Lord had performed in the days of old, when one man chased a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight. He pitied the sorrows of his companions, but he knew that it was worse to flee than to fight. Then he made a short and most excellent speech to them. "It is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few: and with the God of heaven, it is all one, to deliver unto a great multitude or a small company; for the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of a host, but strength cometh from Heaven. They come against us in much pride and iniquity to destroy us and our wives and our children, and to spoil us; but we fight for our lives and our laws. Wherefore the Lord himself will overthrow them before our face, and as for you, be not afraid of them."

He did not believe the modern doctrine that, "God is always with the strongest army." Josephus says that Judas believed that "innocence is the strongest army;" and

the Lord is certainly with those whose strength is in innocence. His little band was roused by his words. At his command, they rushed forth, leaped suddenly on their foes, threw them into a panic, drove them back, and followed after them into the plain, when about eight hundred were destroyed. The rest fled into the land of the Philistines.

When the nations heard of these events, they learned that the Jewish patriots were not to be despised. "Then began the fear of Judas and his brethren, and an exceeding great dread, to fall upon the nations round about them, insomuch that his fame came unto the king, and all nations talked of the battles of Judas."

King Antiochus was full of wrath when he heard of the defeat of his armies. In his fury he resolved to carry out his plans, for destroying the whole Jewish nation and settling other people in their country. He assembled a great army. He promised to pay his soldiers for a year in advance, and perhaps did give them all that his treasury could

supply. But his money began to fail. He had spent too much of it on his vices and in splendid shows. He had played the fool so exceedingly, that the nations had not paid him their taxes. Moreover, he had still a large tax to pay to the Romans. Where should he get the money to carry on his wars? He was greatly troubled, and richly deserved to be in perplexity. He determined to march into Persia, and "gather much money."

Judas and his brethren had now a little rest. No time, however, must be lost. The Lord gave them this interval of quiet to make every preparation for severe struggles. They went silently into the towns and called their kindred together, entreating them to enlist in the noble cause. They found enough of the faithful to make an army of about six thousand men.

They remembered Zion, and were ready to say, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning, and let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

That beloved city "lay waste as a wilderness: there was none of her children that went out or in; the sanctuary also was trodden down, and aliens kept the stronghold: the heathen had their habitation in that place: the joy was taken from Jacob, and the pipe with the harp ceased."

This sad state of things did not bring despair to their stout hearts. It only fired their zeal and nerved them to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. They called upon the Lord, praying him to look with pity on the people who were threatened with extermination, and rescue the temple from the profanation of ungodly men. They prayed that he would "hear the blood that cried unto him," and remember the wicked slaughter of harmless infants and delicate women. They said one to another, "Let us restore the decayed estate of our people, and let us fight for our nation and our sanctuary." Dearest of all earthly things to their hearts, were the nation and the church.

By this time the enemy was coming in like

a flood. Antiochus had left Lysias, "a nobleman and one of the blood-royal," to oversee all the country east of the river Euphrates, while he crossed it to plunder the treasures of Persia. Lysias chose three of the best generals in the land to wage on the war against the Jewish patriots. These were Ptolemy, Nicanor, and Gorgias, mighty men among the king's friends. They led forty thousand footmen and seven thousand horsemen into Judea, and encamped at Emmaus, not far from Modin. They were determined not to leave one Hebrew in the country, and completely root out the religion of Jehovah. The chief cause of this war was a deadly hatred to the word, the worship, and the church of God.

A strange proclamation was sent abroad to all the cities along the sea-coast. It declared that all the Jews who had not yet submitted to heathenism, were to be captured, and thousands of them would be sold as slaves, to any persons who would come and buy them. They were offered on very cheap terms. Only

a talent would purchase almost a hundred of them. Antiochus was so pressed for want of money to pay his tax to the Romans that this barbarous method was adopted to provide the means of keeping peace with that growing nation. We begin to see why Daniel had foretold that Seleucus, the brother of Antiochus should be a *raiser of taxes*. This was the chief business of his life. Many rich men came from different cities to buy slaves, forgetting that the Jews must be captured before they could be sold.

Judas and his six thousand men were now at Mizpeh, where Samuel long before had assembled the people to fast, confess their sins, and pray to the Lord. A fast was observed and the word of God was read. They sought the help of Jehovah. Judas then organized his army. He wished for none but the most brave soldiers. He turned to the twentieth chapter of Deuteronomy, and ordered every thing according to the law. If any man had built a new house, or lately married a wife, or planted a new vineyard, or

was of a fearful heart, he was sent home, lest he should prove a timid warrior, or cause others to be discouraged. Half his men were thus removed from the ranks, and he had but three thousand soldiers, with whom to contend against a large army. They were soon marched to Emmaus, and their tents were pitched within sight of the enemy. The word of their brave leader was, "Arm yourselves, be valiant, and be ready against the morning." Their watchword was, "The victory of God."

Gorgias was an old general, and prided himself on his military skill. He attempted to be very cunning, and to capture the little Jewish army, before half the night had passed. He plotted a fox-like deed of darkness. He took five thousand footmen, and one thousand horsemen, and left his own camps while it was dark. His intention was to rush in upon the camp of the Jews, and suddenly overwhelm them. But Judas was not asleep. He drew his men quietly from their tents, and marched into the open plain. Gorgias and his host

rushed upon the forsaken camp, and were astonished to find no army there. At once he concluded that the Jewish forces had fled in dismay to the mountains, and hastened to seek them. So the crafty old general had the pleasure of spending that night in beating about the woods, or clambering the rocks. With all his skill he could not track the prey.

When the day dawned, Judas was ready to attack the other part of the Syrian army. His soldiers had not armour nor swords, such as they wished, but they had courageous hearts. Judas said to them, "Fear not: let us cry unto heaven that the Lord may have mercy upon us, and remember the covenant of our fathers, and destroy this host before our faces this day. Then shall all the heathen know that there is One who delivereth and saveth Israel."

The Syrians found that Gorgias had not destroyed the little army of patriots, and rushed out of their camp to give them battle. Nicanor led them, expecting to easily capture the victims whom he had promised should be

sold to the merchants for slaves. About one thousand slave-buyers were already there waiting for their prizes. But, at the sound of a trumpet, the Jews were in battle array. Their leader gave the watchword—*The victory of God*. And by his help, truly, they fell upon their foes and routed them, slaying nearly nine thousand of them, taking many prisoners, and driving all the rest from the plain.

Gorgias, angry at the result of his night project, endeavoured to return to the Syrian camp in the morning. He came in sight of it, in time to see that Judas had set it on fire, and was waiting to receive an attack from him, if he felt disposed to an engagement. But the Syrian soldiers were not inclined to attack a man who had so grievously outwitted them, and sent them searching all night for nothing among the mountains. They fled in haste, carrying with them the terror of Judas' name, and publishing it among the nations.

The Jews then took possession of all that had been left by their enemies. They found "much gold and silver, and blue silk, and

purple of the sea, and great riches." They took the money which the slave-dealers had brought, and it is said that several of these merchants were sold as prisoners of war; a change they richly deserved, but could not patiently endure. The ancient Chronicle relates, "As for that most ungracious Nicanor, who had brought a thousand merchants to buy Jews, he was, through the help of the Lord, brought down by those of whom he had made the least account; and putting off his glorious apparel, and discharging his company, he came like a fugitive slave through the midland unto Antioch, having very great dishonour, because his host was destroyed. Thus he that took it upon himself to make good to the Romans their tribute by means of selling the captives in Jerusalem, told abroad that the Jews had God to fight for them, and therefore they could not be hurt, because they followed the laws which he gave them."

The Jews kept the next Sabbath with great joy, "Yielding exceeding praise and thanks unto the Lord who had preserved them unto

that day, which was the beginning of mercy distilling upon them." They then gave a part of the spoils, lawfully taken from their foes, to those who were wounded; part to the widows and orphans in the land, and the remainder they divided among the victors themselves. They prayed God to forgive, if they had done anything amiss, and still continue unto them his mercy and his power.

Lysias had no want of means for learning the fate of the expedition which he had fitted and sent out; for thousands ran home to tell him of the ill success of the king's army. He was sorely disappointed. He knew that his master, the king, would be greatly displeased with his lame attempts to crush out the name and glory of Israel. He resolved upon another effort, forgetting how hard it must ever be to fight against God, or strike successful blows upon his people or his church.

Sixty thousand infantry, and five thousand cavalry followed Lysias the next year, into Judea, and pitched their tents at Bethsura, on the southern borders. Judas met him with

ten thousand men. Seeing the mighty army before him, he trembled when he thought of human power. "The children of Israel were pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the whole country." 1 Kings xx. 27. But he girded himself with strength, when he thought of the words expressed on his banner, "Who is like unto thee among the gods, O Jehovah?" Then he prayed and said, "Blessed art thou, O Saviour of Israel, who didst quell the violence of the mighty man by the hand of thy servant David, and gavest the host of Philistines into the hands of Jonathan the son of Saul, and his armour-bearer; shut up this army in the hand of thy people Israel, and let them be confounded in their power and horsemen; make them to be of no courage, and cause the boldness of their strength to melt away, and let them quake at their destruction; cast them down with the sword of them that love thee, and let all those that know thy name, praise thee with thanksgiving."

The armies came clashing together, but the Syrians were defeated in all their purposes. About five thousand of them were slain, and the rest were seized with terror. They saw how noble were the men of Israel, and how ready to live or die valiantly. They fled in utter confusion. Lysias returned to Antioch baffled, vexed, and yet intent upon making another effort to sweep out from the earth the conquering people of the Lord.

The merit of Judas' sword consisted not in its being the trophy of victory over an enemy, nor a "Damascus blade;" but its wondrous power was bestowed upon it by the "God of battles," who gives success to righteous warriors that he may prove himself also the "God of peace." It was like "the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." His sword shall now glitter in the gates of Jerusalem, and his banner be set upon the walls of Zion.

CHAPTER VII.

GOOD WORK AND GLAD WORSHIP.

B. C. 165.

WHEREVER the hirelings of king Antiochus could lay hands upon copies of the word of God, they had searched them to discover what idols were especially forbidden by the Lord, or were repulsive to the Jewish people. They had painted or carved these idols, and compelled the Jews to worship them. Or they had painted on the copies of the Scriptures the pictures of these idols, so that they might be of no more use to any of the Jews. Judas and his brethren had destroyed many of these images and recovered many copies of the Scriptures. The "Book of the Law" was not lost. This noble band of patriots were Reformers, greatly needed in those times.

We are much indebted to them for the preservation of the Old Testament.

The land was now almost cleared of idolaters. Many Jews, who had been frightened into submission, and forced to offer strange sacrifices, were led back to the true and ancient faith. Those who had remained steadfast worshippers of Jehovah, choosing death rather than a denial of their holy religion, had come forth from their hiding-places, and returned to their homes, hoping for the day soon to come when each one could cherish his own vine and eat of his own fig-tree with no traitor to report him to his foes, and no foe to compel him to sacrifice unto idols.

Jerusalem yet remained to be possessed, and the temple to be purified. Judas and his army marched to the holy city, calling to remembrance the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, who brought back the captives from Babylon, and restored the former inheritance. Sad was the vision before their eyes. Desolation was written everywhere. Shrubs were growing in the very courts of the temple, like the

brush-wood in a forest. Every part of the house of the Lord had been profaned. The priests' chambers had been pulled down, and heathen altars built in the streets. The gates had been burned, and one man who had applied the torch to them had been arrested, and disposed of according to the rewards of severe justice. The sword of Apollonius had once been flourished over the ruins of the city, when he laid all her pleasant things waste; but that sword was now in the hands of the liberator of his country, and the defender of the faith.

There was mourning over the desolations of Zion. Two hundred years before this time, Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem with the "good hand of the Lord upon him." One night he had gone quietly out "by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well," and viewed the ruined walls. How solemn the ruins must have appeared as he gazed upon them by the gray light of the stars or the moon, when the stillness of the night lay on the scene. There were no towers of Zion to be counted; no de-

fences of which to be proud. He was sad of heart. One can build anew with a more cheerful spirit than he can repair the old from the disorderly ruins of ancient splendour. But his friends told him of that "hand of God" which was upon him, and he said to his stout-hearted companions, "Let us rise up and build."

There were enemies to mock at Nehemiah, and to attack the builders of the wall. But the "people had a mind to work." They toiled on, ready to run to each other's aid and defend themselves against their foes. "Half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared;" while the other half gathered stones out of the rubbish and the ashes, and builded the wall till it rose too high for a fox to leap over and dash it down, as their enemies tauntingly declared. So there was a great thorn in the sides of Judas and his brethren, while they attempted to restore the beauty of the city which they loved. The tower which Apollonius had built frowned upon them, and the Syrian soldiers

were ready to hurl the javelin at every man who put forth a hand in the good work. A body of armed men was placed to guard them from all attack. The "Mountain of the Lord's house" was afterwards fortified against this heathen garrison, by strong walls and high towers. There were no rifled cannon to be feared in those days!

Earnest work was needed. Judas began with prayer, so that "the good hand of the Lord" might be upon him. Faith in God and a stout heart never fail in a good cause. He installed the most blameless of the priests in their office, and ordered them to repair the buildings, purify the holy place, and prepare for the restoration of the true worship. We cannot imagine their anxiety to see again true sacrifices offered, holy incense burned, and the vail of the Holy of Holies restored. Every man laboured with enthusiasm. c.

The altar of burnt-offering, which had been defiled with forbidden sacrifices, was carefully taken down. The workmen, having a most sacred reverence for what had once been

dedicated to the Lord, knew not what to do with the stones of this altar. They consulted together, and concluded to lay them up in some secure place of the temple, until a prophet should arise who could tell them what to do with them. They then built a new altar, like the former, for sacrifice. All the furniture of the temple was renewed or restored to its proper place. A day was appointed for sacrifice, and for the re-dedication of the house of the Lord. This day was the twenty-fifth of the ninth month—our eighteenth of December.

Where would they get fire for the altar? In olden times the Lord often sent fire from heaven to kindle the wood which consumed the sacrifice. When the temple was dedicated by Solomon, fire came down from heaven upon the altar, and was most sacredly preserved there night and day, until extinguished in the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians. For the law was plain; "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out." (Lev. vi. 13.) Other nations no doubt

heard of this "fire of the Lord," and hence pretended that they too received fire from heaven. The Persians pretended to have the "eternal fire." The Romans had vestal virgins to watch their altars and keep the fire perpetually burning. No doubt these were imitated from the Hebrews.

The priests now followed the plan, said to have been adopted when the temple was rebuilt under Ezra. They took two flints and struck them together, and thus kindled the fire on the altar. They wished to borrow no flame from the heathen, nor from any ordinary hearth. With this they lighted the seven candle sticks, and burned incense on the proper altar.

The people rose early on the day appointed for the feast of the dedication, and engaged heartily and devotedly in the solemn worship. For more than three long years these services had been suspended. The temple was again consecrated to the Lord. There was joy and gladness in the streets. Each one seemed to have a new song in his mouth, and a new hope

in his heart. "A little reviving" was granted to the persecuted people. They did not care for the chill of the winter's day, or the storm of the winter's night. They illuminated the windows of their houses, set candles in their doors, and called it the "festival of lights." Judas provided "rich and splendid sacrifices! and he honoured God, and delighted them by hymns and psalms." For eight days these services and festivities continued, and it became a custom among the Jews to observe this "feast of the dedication" every year. Our Lord, about two hundred years after, honoured it with his presence, when he, perhaps shielding himself and his hearers from the cold, "walked in Solomon's porch." It was truly a time long to be remembered.

The patriots had gained possession of the capital city, and had reformed the abuses of the sanctuary. When it was known among the neighbouring nations that all efforts to destroy the Jewish people had only roused them up to crush idolatry, and to recover their city and temple, it greatly displeased the

envious heathen. Their rulers were angry and their people ready to fight against the worshippers of God. They raged; they imagined a vain thing; they set themselves against the Lord, and his chosen ones. They decreed anew the destruction of the Jews, and began to slay them in fury. They seized those who were dwelling or travelling among them, robbed them of their goods, or put them to death.

The noise of this tribulation rose loud to Heaven. It also came to the ears of Judas and his devoted followers. The persecuted brethren cried to them for help. This valiant general again took the sword, and led his army to the battle. He smote many cities, humbled many nations, defeated every army that made war against him, and brought many Jews back to their own land, where they could worship God without persecution. They came singing psalms on their way, and indulging such tokens of gladness as are usual in the celebration of victories. They who were most devoted to God, enjoyed the fulfilment of the promise,

“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.”

Great exploits are related of Judas, as being performed about this time. The men of Joppa had persuaded a party of Jews to take their wives and children and enjoy a sail upon the sea. But the unsuspecting party was betrayed, and no less than two hundred of them were drowned. An armed force was speedily marched to Joppa, to avenge this treacherous crime, and Judas set fire to the ships and destroyed the harbour at Joppa, leaving the people in terror of his name. Jamnia was also kindled by the flaming torch, and humbled to the dust of her own ashes. A large body of wandering Arabs was forced to cease their invasions, and after delivering large numbers of cattle to the conquerors, the chieftains shook hands, and the Arabs sought other borders where to pitch their tents, robbing and maiming at will. In one of his battles several Jews lay dead upon the field. After the Sabbath was passed, his men took up the bodies of the slain, to bury them among their

kindred. When under the coats of the dead were found things that were consecrated to idols, and which the Jews were forbidden to take as spoils. This forbidden plunder was regarded as the cause of their death, and their friends resorted to prayer, that God would pardon the sin, and not bring the army into judgment. The soldiers collected money to ~~buy~~ sacrifices, that a sin-offering might be made for the transgressions of the soldiers. They remembered the sin of Achan, and feared such a defeat as had once been known in the valley of Achor.

It is said of Judas in the first book of Macabees: "All his brethren helped him, and so did all they that held with his father, and they fought with cheerfulness the battle of Israel. So he got his people great honour, and put on a breastplate as a giant, and girt his warlike harness about him, and he made battles protecting the host with his sword. In his acts he was like a lion, and like a young lion roaring for his prey: for he pursued the wicked, and sought them out, and burnt up

those that vexed his people. Wherefore the wicked shrunk for fear of him, and all the workers of iniquity were troubled, because salvation prospered in his hand. He grieved also many kings, and made Jacob glad with his acts, and his memorial is blessed for ever. Moreover he went through the cities of Judah, destroying the ungodly out of them, and turning away wrath from Israel; so that he was renowned unto the utmost parts of the earth, and he gathered together such as were ready to perish."

CHAPTER VIII.

DEATH IN HIGH PLACES.

B. C. 164.

GREAT was the wrath of king Antiochus when he learned that the Jews had risen up in the might of God, resisted and defeated his armies ; put to shame his skilful generals ; sold some of his friends, the slave-buyers, as slaves, and declared themselves free ; gained the capital, restored the temple, and banished idolatry ; fortified the towns and built towers of defence ; conquered other nations around them and delivered thousands of their brethren who were threatened with death. He had just failed in his attempts to conquer a Persian city, Elymais, renowned for riches, silver, and gold, and a temple with treasure enough in it to have supplied him with large

money for his perpetual taxes and his provoking wars. This failure almost crushed his spirit, but the burden of tidings from Judea was too heavy for him to bear.

Historians do not agree as to the manner of his death, but both Roman and Jewish writers declare that his end was miserable. Even the books of the Maccabees disagree upon this point. One account is that he died in Babylon, calling friends to him and saying; "Into what tribulation am I come; and how great a flood of misery is it wherein I now am! for I was bountiful and beloved in my power. But now I remember the evils that I did in Jerusalem, and that I took all the vessels of gold and silver that were therein, and sent to destroy the inhabitants of Judea without a cause. I perceive, therefore, that for this cause, these troubles are come upon me, and behold, I perish through great grief in a strange land."

Another account represents him as hasting toward Judea with all his might, and "swelling with anger," declaring that he would

make Jerusalem a burying-place for the Jews. Then the Lord smote him with a horrible plague, so that he, who "thought a little before that he could command the waves of the sea, or reach to the stars of heaven," became the loathing of his friends. Compare the death of Herod Agrippa. Acts xii.

The Lord turned this man's wrath to ^{his} his own praise. The Jews had been almost tempted completely into the idolatry of the Greeks, when Antiochus began to reign. If they had been quietly allowed to adopt the practices of the heathen, there would have been the most criminal departure of the Jews from God, and the utter corruption of the church. They could have been led, and were being led astray rapidly, but they could not be driven into idolatry. In the mercy of God toward them, persecution came upon them. Antiochus first insisted on their total renunciation of the true religion. This opened the eyes of the people, and the most devoted among them began to labour in order to prevent the denial of that religion which God

had given to their fathers, and which was their richest inheritance. Antiochus next declared that the Jews should be smitten from the face of the earth. This led them to depend upon God for help, and to resist the barbarous decree. They renounced idolatry. They hated it. They loved more and more the worship and the law of the Lord. They were persecuted, but thereby were purified; they passed through the furnace, but were taught to "glorify God in the fires;" they were greatly afflicted and severely chastised, but thus learned that they were chosen to be the children of God.

When Antiochus was dying, he called Philip, one of his favourites, to him, and put into his hands his crown, his signet-ring, and royal robe, to be preserved for his son, then about nine years of age. Philip was to act as king until this young Antiochus should become old enough to reign. He was to make it his chief care to educate his royal pupil in all the arts of government. He hastened to Antioch, carrying with him the body of the

dead king. After burying it with more honour than such a man deserved, he sought for the young prince, but to his surprise and bitter disappointment, another person had usurped his place.

Lysias had heard of the king's death, and paid no regard to his dying voice. He had assumed the authority, and had placed the young Antiochus on the throne, giving him the name of Eupator, as we shall do in these pages. It is possible, that if Philip had obtained the place to which he was appointed, he would have adopted a gentler policy toward the Jews. He had heard his dying king promise to grant them many favours; and, if reports be true, Antiochus in his last hours, had written to them, calling them "the good Jews, his citizens," wishing them "much joy, health, and prosperity," and asking "that every man will be faithful to me and my son, for I am persuaded that he, following my mind, will favourably and graciously yield to my desires." But late repentance does not often arrest the wickedness which an evil

heart has set on foot in the world. Dying men cannot root out the tares they have sown.

The kings of those times had many a game to play. We shall hear of another claimant to this Syrian throne. There is a young man at Rome, who thinks that he has been there long enough, and is taking measures to get away. He was sent there about twelve years before, as a hostage in the place of his uncle. That uncle has been king in his nephew's place, and is now dead. He claims the crown. This aspirant is Demetrius, now twenty-three years of age. He asks the Roman senate to confirm him as king on the throne at Antioch, promising to regard Rome as his native country, the senators as his fathers, and their sons as his brothers. But the senate does not trust his promises. They are fearful of the power which he might exert against them. They think it best to keep him at Rome, and to acknowledge Eupator as king.

These events gave the Jews more time to fortify their towns, and collect their men into armies. Moreover, Ptolemy Macron, to whom the utter extermination of the Jewish race had once been entrusted, had learned that it was vain to fight against such brave patriots as followed Judas, and he suddenly had become their friend. He refused to make battle against them. This brought him into trouble. He was charged with having been bribed, and acting the part of a traitor. His accusers well knew that he had once played the traitor for their benefit, when he delivered to them the Island of Cyprus. They loved the gains of treason, but despised the traitor. If a man is bribed to do a wicked deed, his employer may be pleased with the benefit he receives, but he will always hate the man who could be bribed to commit an evil. This man was perhaps honest in his friendship to the Jews, but it cost him his office of governor, and he took his own life. He first appears in our history putting to death the Jewish ambassadors sent to Tyre to complain of Menelaus, and he last

appears as his own murderer. Every wicked man is destroying his own soul.

The Jews hoped for times of peace and prosperity. They prepared to keep the year of rest, an intimation that their current year had been one of great abundance. Lev. xxv. 20. It proves too that the reformation has not been fruitless of good results in bringing the people back to the good laws of the ancient times. The Lord designed to teach his people by this beautiful provision, that he was their preserver, and that their property and their time were not their own, but were his.

It does not appear to have been a year of constant worship, after the mode of a Sabbath day, for there were no extraordinary religious services prescribed for it. The people could visit and talk on its week-days, as in other years. But the land was to have rest. No farming, nor vine-dressing was allowed. Whatever grew, without culture, in the fields and pastures, was not considered as having any special owner. It was the Lord's through

all that year, and any one could enjoy it as he chose. It required faith in God to observe it. Among other requirements, the whole law of God was to be publicly read at the feast of tabernacles, in the sanctuary. Copies of the Scriptures were scarce, and yet this was no excuse for neglecting the word of God. Besides the regular readings, and the constant oral instruction, all men were to hear it all read at least once in seven years. They were presumed to have such well-disposed hearts, that they would also have good memories; and a good memory of God's truth is greatly dependent on a faithful obedience.

CHAPTER IX.

A VAIN TREATY.

B. C. 163.

JUDAS the Maccabee had still a watchful eye upon the citadel, or fortress of Akra, built by enemies at a time of invasion, and whose garrison had so long annoyed the rightful dwellers in Jerusalem. Often as they passed toward the temple for worship, the lance was hurled at them, and Syrian soldiers marched forth, met them when unarmed, slew all they could, and drove the rest back to their homes. Judas resolved to put an end to these insults and outrages. He called the people together, and laid siege to the place. The most severe engines of war, then invented,

were employed. Instead of columbiads, and rifled cannon, hot shot, and shells, they had machines for hurling stones at the enemy. But the walls were too strong to be battered down, and the soldiers had too much provision in store to be soon starved into a surrender of the garrison. It was probably held by apostate Jews, and there was no martial law declared, to forbid the obtaining of supplies.

Certain of the Syrian soldiers escaped from the citadel, and persuading a few traitorous Jews to join with them, they went to Antioch for assistance. They told king Eupator, and Lysias his general, that Judas and his brethren were in rebellion against the throne, and were determined to drive out, or slay, all the Syrian forces; they had built walls about the temple, and had fortified a town south of Jerusalem, named Bethsura, "Wherefore," said they, "if thou dost not prevent them quickly, they will do greater things than these, neither shalt thou be able to rule them."

The young king was angry at this news, and his general was furious. Lysias, enraged

by his former defeat, took time to fight the Jews. He increased his army by bands of hired soldiers from other kingdoms, and from the isles of the sea.

Probably some of these hirelings were Cretans, who seem to have been ready to sell themselves to any man who had money and wished to usurp a throne. Paul quoted the ancient proverb, "the Cretans are always liars"—always treacherous. Plutarch often refers to their baseness. A Cretan once agreed to carry Perseus, his treasure, and family, across the sea from Samothracia, where he was guarded by enemies. The Cretan came, and took the treasure into his little ship. But like a "true Cretan" he left Perseus to come to the shore at night. This unfortunate general escaped through a narrow window and let himself down by a wall, with his wife and children, only to wander and sigh along the shore; and what were his groans when one told him that he had seen the Cretan sailor far out at sea, with sails full of wind, and bearing down toward his island home. We

shall hear of these Cretan mercenaries again, and if they were now hired to Lysias, they were not "attached to his person, but to his money, as bees to the honeycomb."

He had about one hundred thousand footmen, twenty thousand cavalry, and thirty-two elephants well trained for battle. On each of these elephants was girded a tower of wood, in which were thirty-two soldiers and an Indian master to manage him. Men then dreaded those elephants, as soldiers now fear the "flying artillery."

The young king marched at the head of the army which Lysias commanded. They passed around to the south of the Dead Sea, and came to Bethsura, a town not far from Hebron, and about twenty miles from Jerusalem. Judas had fortified it strongly, and the inhabitants were not disposed to betray it to the enemy. For many days this great army besieged it with all their engines of war. Some of the defenders sallied forth, fought desperately, and applied the torch to the camp of the enemy.

Judas had already hastened from Jerusalem with a small, but courageous force of men, who were willing to put their lives in jeopardy for the sake of their righteous cause. They "praised the merciful God all together, and took heart, insomuch that they were ready, not only to fight with men, but with most cruel beasts, and to pierce through walls of iron." We can scarcely think that there "appeared before them on horse-back one in white clothing, shaking his armour of gold," for this was not the manner of a Bible miracle. But we readily believe that "they marched forward in their armour, having a Helper from heaven; for the Lord was merciful to them." They encamped about seven miles from the enemy, in a narrow pass of the mountains, at Bath-Zacharias.

Then the king, rising very early, marched fiercely with his hosts toward the Jewish encampment. He made his elephants follow one another through the narrow passes along with the terrible array of infantry and cavalry. The advancing mass filled the valley, and ex-

tended up the sides of the mountains. The sun shone upon the shields of brass, and of gold, till the mountains glittered in splendour, and they echoed afar the loud shouts of the multitude. The clangor of arms and of trumpets roused the men, and the elephants were provoked to battle by showing them the blood of grapes and of mulberries.

Judas and his army met the enemy and beneath their strokes six hundred men fell in the valley. His brother, Eleazar, saw one of the elephants armed with the royal harness, and supposed the king was upon him. He resolved to cut his way to this noble animal. If successful he might deliver his countrymen; if he perished, he would win for his name a perpetual renown. He ran upon him courageously, slaying on the right and on the left, and throwing himself under the elephant stabbed him fatally, and was killed by the fall. He did excite the admiration of his people, but he could not turn the overwhelming tide of the battle. Judas was forced to retreat to Jerusalem, and there prepare for a siege.

The garrison at Bethsura had already consumed the provisions in their fortress, and were forced to surrender. It was the year of rest, and no supplies from the country could be obtained. The Syrian army pitched their tents against Mount Zion. For many days they besieged the sanctuary. They set up their "artillery with engines to cast fire and stones," and instruments to hurl darts and arrows. Judas firmly resisted them. Provisions became scarce in the city. Many of the Jews fled to the country, and the few soldiers who were left with him were almost in despair. But God had wisely ordered events for their relief.

The Syrians were in a starving condition. Moreover, just then came a report that Philip, who had failed to become the royal tutor, was resolved to become the conqueror of the king. He was on the march toward the capital, leading a strong army out of Persia. Lysias was alarmed. He went in haste to the king and his counsellors, saying, "We decay daily, and our victuals are but small,

and the place we lay siege unto is strong, and the affairs of the kingdom lie heavily upon us ; now, therefore, let us give our hands to these men, and make peace with them, and with all their nation, and pledge them that hereafter they shall live according to their own laws, as they did before." To this counsel they all agreed.

Well had it been, if some one could have whispered to Judas the cautions of a Jewish writer, "Never trust thine enemy, for like as iron rusted, so is his wickedness. Let him not by thee, lest when he hath overthrown thee, he stand up in thy place. Who will pity the charmer that is bitten by a serpent, or any such as come nigh to wild beasts ? So one that goeth to a sinner and is mingled with him in his sins, who will pity ? For a while he will abide with thee, but if thou begin to fall, he will not tarry. An enemy speaketh sweetly with his lips, but in his heart he imagineth how to throw thee into a pit : he will weep with his eye, but if he find opportunity he will not be satisfied with blood.

If adversity come upon thee, thou shalt find him there first, and though he pretend to help thee, yet shall he undermine thee. He will shake his head and clap his hands, and whisper much, and change his countenance."

Judas accepted the conditions of peace. The king and the princes took a solemn oath to fulfil all their engagements. The Jewish army was led forth out of the temple. The gates of the city were thrown open. Judas then saw his mistake. The king entered, leading a strong force into Mount Zion. He then violated his oath, outraged all human confidence, threw down the walls, and dismounted the fortifications. Then, departing in all haste, he returned to Antioch, where he found Philip the master of the city; so he fought against him and took it by force, slaying the man who had been his father's friend to the last.

It seems that Menelaus, who had been compelled to forsake the high-priesthood, and flee the city of Jerusalem, was in company with the king in his march against Judea. He

hoped to regain his place, when the Syrians should conquer the Jews, and become the governor of the land. He was very officious in rendering aid to the enemies of his countrymen. Lysias hated him, and advised the king to slay him, for he was the cause of all the mischief that had befallen them. He was the man who had persuaded Antiochus to deal so harshly with the Jews, and to labour in vain to compel them into a denial of their religion, or to destroy them from the earth. He had brought evil on both nations, and deserved to perish. The king had no special friendship for this imposing deceiver, and readily followed the advice of his general. Menelaus was sent to Berea, and was there put to death. For ten years he had been a curse to his own nation. Judas had not accepted his offices. The king gave the high-priesthood to Alcimus, a man who did not belong to the house of Aaron. The heathen kings did not care for the ordinances of Jehovah, and often appointed wicked men to this sacred office. It was sometimes sold to

the highest bidder. This continued until the days of our Lord, when the Jews wished to acknowledge him to be high-priest who was of the family of Aaron; but they were compelled to acknowledge one appointed by the Romans. Hence there were often two persons claiming to be high-priest at one time.

Alcimus proved himself the equal of Menelaus in wickedness. If not guilty of treason against men, he was certainly a traitor to Jehovah, for he encouraged Grecian idolatry, and desecrated the temple of the Lord. The Jews rejected him, as unfit for the holy office; but he excited the Syrians to renew the war, in order to support his own authority.

Onias, the son of the worthy Onias III., whom Menelaus had caused to be slain at Antioch, ought to have been the high-priest. Wounded in spirit, and probably thinking that the Jewish nation would be expelled from their land, he afterward fled into Egypt, and there became a friend of the king and queen. He persuaded them to allow him to build a temple there for the Jews. He claimed that God had

so foretold. Isaiah xix. 19. The temple built there was not so large as that at Jerusalem, but was modeled after it. Onias then acted as high-priest, and the services were regularly performed.

CHAPTER X.

OLD FOES WITH A NEW FACE.

B. C. 162—161.

THE Jews were now to meet old foes with a new face.

The throne of Syria was still the old foe. The new face was that of Demetrius, who was like a caged lion gnawing at the gratings, while still a hostage at Rome. He was glad when his cousin Eupator involved himself in trouble with the Romans. It was the best news he had heard from his own country, from which he had been absent about twelve years. The Romans had been sent by their senate to inquire how the young king and his general Lysias were keeping the treaty with the Roman government. They found that Eupator had more ships and elephants than

the treaty allowed them, and taking all above the proper number, they burned the ships and killed the elephants. This roused the anger of the Syrians, and they permitted Octavius to be killed by a ruffian, of whose design it was supposed Lysias knew more than he chose to reveal. This encouraged the Romans to hope that they, sometime, would conquer that country, but it led Demetrius to think that he would very soon take the throne from his cousin.

The impatient hostage told his Roman friends one day that he was going to recruit himself a little by hunting in the neighbouring districts. Polybius, the celebrated Greek historian, was also a hostage in Rome, and he assisted Demetrius in his plans, and proposed to join him in his search for game. These hostages were hunting for fiercer game than had lately been known in the Italian forests. A Tyrian vessel was carelessly lying in the harbour at Ostia, waiting for the princely hunters. They came in time, took ships, and struck for Tripolis, not far from Tyre, leav-

ing the Roman senate to hunt for their hostages as craftily as they pleased.

Demetrius reached the coasts of Syria, with eight friends. He gave out that he was a great prince sent by the Roman senate to take the kingdom which his uncle had wrested from his hands. The report flew over the land on the wings of the wind, and refreshing as good news from a far country, for the people were glad to hear of his coming. Eupator was at once looked upon as a lost man, forsaken by friends, and betrayed by foes. He and Lysias were seized by their own troops, and delivered over to the new-comer, who refused to see their faces, and had them put to death. Thus Demetrius became established upon the throne. By ridding the Babylonians of their tyrants, he gained the name of Soter, or Saviour, which was perhaps also intended to mean that he was resolved to be the destroyer of the Jews.

Alcimus had laboured in vain to persuade the Jews to acknowledge him as their high-priest, and now gave himself up to work all

manner of wickedness. He gathered around him a few discontented and treacherous men, and went to the new king, presenting him a crown of gold, and such branches of the palm-tree as were sacredly used in the temple. He passed himself off as the high-priest and governor of the Jewish nation. The king inquired concerning the Jews, and Alcimus told him that "the Assideans, whose captain was Judas Maccabeus, nourished war, were seditious, and would not let the realm be in peace:" that he, being anxious to please the king, and also to save his own countrymen from the party of Judas, had come for help, and that Judas and his brethren had slain all the king's friends, or driven them out of the land. He asked the king to send some man to destroy all those who would not submit to the decrees of the Syrian court. One would think that Alcimus had been educated in Crete.

The king was ready for the war. He promised to establish Alcimus in the office of high-priest, and sent Bacchides with an army to instal him. They marched into Judea in

great power, and sent words of peace to Judas; but Judas saw the net spread for his destruction, and would not become entangled in it.

The Assideans, long faithful to the patriotic cause, did not perceive the fraud, and were caught in the snare. They made peace with the old foe because he had a new face. No sooner were they in the power of Alcimus, than he put sixty of them to death, among whom were several scribes and doctors of the law. Others of them would gladly have returned to Judas, but Bacchides put them into pits, or drove them into caves, there to die of starvation. Unto Alcimus resorted all those who troubled the people.

Judas was not at rest. He led his forces against the towns which had deserted him, and humbled them into allegiance. He would have driven out the enemy at once, but Alcimus, trembling before his power, sent to the king for greater forces, and said worse things of the patriots than ever before.

Nicanor, not forgotten by the reader, nor

forgetful of his last exploits in Judea, had uttered a thousand blasphemies against the Almighty, and his holy temple in Jerusalem. He was indignant that a handful of men should resist the large armies of Syria, by trusting in God for victory, and pleading the promises made of old, in the city of David. He was sent to Jerusalem with a great army, to destroy the power of Judas, and make Alcimus the high-priest. At first he endeavoured to betray Judas by his pretended friendship, saying, "Let there be no battle between us; I will come with a few men that I may see you in peace." They met. They shook hands. They were pledging peace to each other. But the eye of Judas was his best watchman. Just then he saw that Nicanor was giving a signal to his soldiers to rush upon him and take him by violence. He escaped the treachery. This foe had not been a dull learner in the royal schools of treason, which constituted so largely the politics of ancient courts.

A battle followed. Judas not only defended

himself, but slew about five thousand of the enemy, and drove Nicanor into the citadel, still held by the friends of the Syrians in Jerusalem.

It is related by one of the chroniclers, that Nicanor, hearing of "the manliness of those that were with Judas," and of the courage with which they fought for their country, durst not try the matter with the sword. He proposed a conference, and a day was fixed upon for the meeting. The benches were arranged, and Judas placed armed men in convenient places to protect him, in case any treachery should be attempted. They adopted certain articles of peace. Nicanor still abode in Jerusalem, and did no hurt. It is said that he formed an attachment for Judas, and was unwilling to have him out of his sight, for he loved the man from his heart. Judas took a wife and dwelt in peace. But Alcimus could not endure this arrangement, for it left him without the very office for which he had excited the war. Returning to Antioch, he told the king that Nicanor was well-affected

toward the Jews, and that he not only loved Judas, but was laying a plot to make him the successor to the Syrian throne. This story threw the king into a greater rage than ever, and an order was sent to Nicanor to break all treaties with the Jews, seize Judas, and forward him to Antioch by safe hands. The royal order greatly perplexed Nicanor, for he was unwilling to violate the treaty, but he knew that there was no peace with the king unless his commands were obeyed. He first tried a crafty policy, which failed: for Judas seeing that he "began to be churlish unto him," and knowing that "such sour behaviour came not of good," withdrew himself from the enemy, and collected men for defence.

Many of the heathen and apostate Jews, whom Judas had driven from the land, now returned and flocked to the standard of the Syrian general. Certain priests and elders came and saluted him peaceably, offering to make sacrifices in behalf of the king. But he mocked them, laughed at them, abused them

shamefully, and declared that if they did not deliver Judas to him, he would destroy the house of the Lord, and build there a temple to Bacchus.

Then the priests stood before the altars weeping, and praying for the help of Him to whom the temple was dedicated, and by whose power the angel of the Lord had once slain the proud Assyrian host in a night. One of the elders named Razzis, a lover of his countrymen, dealt rashly with his own life, rather than surrender himself to the enemy. Nicanor sent a large body of men to capture him, and after being severely wounded, he rushed through their ranks, and destroyed himself. Among the Romans and Greeks, this would have been applauded as an act of heroism and greatness of soul. They honoured the deed of one who took his own life rather than die by the hand of an enemy. But the Bible never justified the Jewish people in applauding this act of self-murder. It is noble to die firm as a martyr to the truth of God, but it is base to take one's own life, as if this act

could deliver one from a severe earthly trial. The Bible never justifies a suicide; much less applauds the reckless deed. If Razzis had been a true martyr, he would have "obtained a good report through faith." It was pride in him rather than patience. He flew to death by his own hands, rather than sum up courage to meet and endure the threatened evils.

While terror reigned in the city, Judas was calm, and still hopeful that God would grant him a victory. He had three thousand men with him, among the mountains round about Jerusalem. Nicanor resolved to fight him upon the Sabbath, declaring that if the Lord was king in heaven, he was king on earth, and would teach the Jews that his commands must be obeyed. He boasted that he would set up a monument over their leader, to show unto all nations that he was a deceiver of the people. Such a rebuke of deception ill became his lips. Then came the fierce onset, and the clash of arms. One of the first who fell was Nicanor, and his soldiers seeing him

dead on the field, fled in the wildest dismay, casting down their weapons and scattering in every direction, like sheep when the shepherd is slain. They ran, frightened by the trumpets blown by their pursuers, and the noise called forth the people from the towns of Judea, who slew the Syrians in great numbers, and again were filled with courage to stand firm on the side of their God, and their father-land.

Rich spoils were carried to Jerusalem, and the head of Nicanor, like that of Goliath in olden times, was regarded as a trophy of wonderful deliverance. Judas, who was the "chief defender of the people both in body and in mind," received the rewards of the brave conqueror. The people kept a day of great gladness, and resolved to celebrate this victory every year, calling it "Nicanor's day." The land of Judea was at rest for a little while.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEATH OF THE MACCABEE.

B. C. 161.

JUDAS had now become very powerful and wealthy, so that he was a prince among the people. He did not, however, become selfish, and live merely for the pleasures of this life. For five or six years he had been engaged in defending his country from being utterly ruined, and he had grown weary of war. He could not see where the strife would end. When old foes were silenced, new enemies rose up in their stead. All Syria was against him. No treaty with these northern foes could insure lasting peace. No help was to be expected from the neighbouring nations. He has often been blamed for looking toward Rome, and asking protection, but he did what

perhaps the wisest of modern men would have done in his trying circumstances.

It is well to notice when the Romans began to hold that power over Judea, which finally made it a mere Roman province. Judas learned that the Romans were always ready to support the weak nations against the oppression of tyrants. He heard that they were mighty and valiant men, who were rapidly conquering the world, yet none of them wore a crown, or was robed in purple to appear magnificent. He heard, "moreover, how they had made for themselves a senate-house, wherein three hundred and twenty men sat in council daily, consulting always for the people, to the end that they might be well ordered; and that they committed their government to one man* every year, who

* "There were two consuls, but the conduct of military affairs was committed to one." (*Grotius.*) Or Judas may not have been correctly informed of their mode of government. As to the absence of "envy and emulation" among them, he was certainly mistaken, for the politicians of Rome were not free from contentious and bitter rivalries.

ruled over all their country, and that all were obedient to that one, and that there was neither envy nor emulation among them." Is it strange, then, that he sought their good will and their help ?

Two honourable men were sent to Rome, where they were received by the senate with great respect. Their message was this: "Judas Maccabeus, with his brethren, and the people of the Jews, have sent us to make a confederacy and peace with you, and that we might be registered your confederates and friends."

The senate wrote their will on tables of brass, and sent it to Jerusalem; "Good success be to the Romans, and to the people of the Jews, by sea and by land for ever; the sword also and the enemy be far from them. If there come first any war upon the Romans, or any of their confederates throughout all their dominions, the Jews shall help them with all their heart; neither shall they give anything to those that make war upon them, or aid them with any victuals, weapons, money,

or ships, but they shall keep their treaties without taking anything therefor. And so, too, if war shall come first upon the Jews, the Romans shall help them with all their heart, and refuse to aid their enemies." The Romans also sent a letter to Demetrius, in which were these words, "Wherefore hast thou made thy yoke heavy upon our friends and confederates, the Jews? If, therefore, they complain any more against thee, we will do them justice and fight with thee by sea and by land."

Judas did not live to receive these friendly messages, nor did the letter to Demetrius reach him in time to prevent another war. The king heard that Nicanor and his army had been slain, and he was in a rage. He sent Bacchides again with Alcimus, to conquer the resisting Jews. They led the flower and force of the Syrian army, numbering twenty-two thousand men, and encamped before Jerusalem. Judas met them with three thousand troops, but so many took fright and fled, that he was left with only eight hundred

warriors. No aid had come from Rome, and perhaps he quite failed to put his trust in the Lord of hosts. Perhaps he began to think that his own arm had gotten him the former victories. When he saw "that his host slipped away, and that the battle pressed upon him, he was sorely troubled in mind." Still he said to his noble band, "Let us arise and go up against our enemies, if, peradventure, we may be able to fight them." They plead to return and save their lives and their cause by a wise retreat, till they could muster a large army for the victory. His answer was, "God forbid that I should retreat. Let not the sun ever see such a thing, that I should turn my face from the foe. If our time be come, let us die manfully for our brethren, and not stain our honour." He had the boldness to hazard a battle, and he perished, overpowered by multitudes. His brave companions fled the field.

Judas died the martyr and the champion of his country. Among those lofty spirits who have nobly resisted the most wanton op-

pression, few have surpassed the Maccabee. None ever fell valorously in a better cause. His brothers, Jonathan and Simon, took his body to Modin and buried it in the sepulchre of his fathers. There he had begun his noble career of righteous war in defence of his people, and the holy religion which made his conscience tender for the Sabbath, and his heart strong in prayer. He loved the word of God, the Sabbath, the temple, the altar, the city of the Great King, and the service of Jehovah. None loved the people more, none governed them with greater wisdom, none led them to more splendid victories. That God who had always a miracle for his people in more ancient times, had mercy for them in the days of the Maccabee. He was the last great human leader, like Joshua, and deliverer, like David, the Jews ever had in their nation. After him we shall find decline and decay, until we meet with the ignoble Herods who sank the nation under the weight of foreign dominion. The one fatal act of Judas the Maccabee, was his appeal to the Romans.

The Lord seemed to frown upon it as a departure from him, as Israel's eternal King, and a vain call for the help of man. Every attempt to link the peculiar people of God with heathen nations brought upon them a chain of dire calamities, and only when they looked to Jehovah for deliverance were the bonds of captivity broken.

We go from the grave of Judas with a lingering tread, and lend our hearts to the heavy grief of his people, when "they bewailed him, and all Israel made great lamentation for him, and mourned him many days, saying, 'How is the valiant man fallen, that delivered Israel!' As for other things concerning Judas and his wars, and the noble acts which he did, and his greatness, they are not written; for they were very many." The reformation which was first and last in his heart, was at its noon. His life affords the brightest light enjoyed in Judea, from the days of Nehemiah. There was, after him, a more formal national liberty, secured as the result of his efforts; but there was less real devotion to

the worship of God, and prayerful confidence in Jehovah's power. A later time brought Jewish independence, but there was not a sufficient recognition of theocratic power to maintain the inheritance of liberty. The patriotism and piety of Judas were not utterly lost to the nation for half a century. For six years he led Israel's hosts, and defended the altars of Jehovah. He died B. C. 161, in the vigour of his strength.

CHAPTER XII.

A NEW CHIEFTAIN.

B. C. 160—154.

AFTER the death of Judas, "the wicked began to put forth their heads from their hiding-places," and to creep forth to welcome the foes of the country, and destroy the friends of the law, the temple, and the worship of Jehovah. A great famine threw the people into despair, so that they were ready to submit to any rulers who would make the most flattering promises. Bacchides was in the country, claiming to be its governor, and Alcimus demanded the honours paid to the high-priest. No favour was shown to any who were friends of Judas, or who would not renounce their altars and their holy religion.

The friends of Judas came together, and resolved not to abandon their cause. The

fire of patriotism still burned. They chose Jonathan to be their prince and captain. Him they would follow, and the Lord would they serve. Jonathan and Simon are often called the Asmonean princes. Never had they been envious of their noble brother, a fact almost unparalleled among ancient rulers, and now they sought to adopt his wisdom, and profit by his experience. The hand of the foe was lifted against the new leader.

Jonathan led his forces into the neighbourhood of a little town among the mountains, called Tekoa, whence long before came the artful woman to king David to intercede for the exiled Absalom. Perhaps these patriots could read her words with comfort to their tried hearts. "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person; yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him." The place had been fortified by Rehoboam, and from its commanding position was still an excellent place for self-defence.

John, the brother of Jonathan, a captain of the people, was sent to a neighbouring tribe to ask protection for the trains of wagons and baggage-men, which supplied the army with provisions, as they should pass through their country. But certain Arabs fell suddenly upon John and his company, slew them, and plundered their train. A bridal party paid for this outrage.

Jonathan, hearing that one of these Arab chiefs was about to be married to a daughter of one of the nobles of Canaan, resolved to break up the match. The day came. The bride was led forth with great pomp to meet the bridegroom. The bridegroom was marching in splendid style to meet his bride. Then large companies met among the mountains, and their joyous shouts of salutation went echoing through the vales. The Arab chief advanced to take the hand of his bride, when such objections as were never heard before to a marriage, astounded their ears. A band of armed men rushed forth from an ambush, slew many of the Arabs, drove the rest in

confusion into the wilderness, and avenged the death of John. We lament the fate of the intended bride, but war does not always regard the sacredness of human affection.

Bacchides was soon encamped against the Jewish forces, which were now occupying a place with the Jordan on one side and a marsh on the other. The Syrian army was led on the Sabbath-day into the narrow pass before the Jewish camp. The general expected to hedge them in, and capture them on a day when they would not fight. But Jonathan thought it not wrong for his people to defend themselves on Sabbath. He said to them, "Let us go up and fight for our lives, for it standeth not with us to-day, as in time past, for behold the battle is before us, and behind us, and the water of Jordan is on this side, and on that side the marsh and the wood; neither is there any place to escape. Wherefore cry ye to Heaven, that ye may be delivered from the hand of your enemies."

The foes advanced, and were met with courage. But Jonathan saw that there was

no hope of beating them back, and ordering his men to follow, he leaped into the Jordan, and they all escaped to the other side of the river. Bacchides returned to Jerusalem. Thinking himself governor of the country, he fortified many towns with high walls, forts, gates, and bars, and placed garrisons at such places as Jericho, Emmaus, and Bethel, that the Jews might be kept in subjection. The citadel of Akra in Jerusalem was strongly fortified, and in it he placed the sons of many chief men among the Jews, to be held as hostages. He imagined that Jonathan would submit in despair of ever regaining the freedom of his countrymen. The Syrians appeared to hold undisputed sway for two years. During these two years, Jonathan and Simon were secretly collecting men in the silent retreats of the country, and preparing for the recovery of their lost liberties.

In the mean time, Alcimus began to ravage the temple. He pulled down the wall of the inner court, beyond which only Jews had been allowed to enter, and wished to destroy all

that was sacred in the hearts of the most devout worshippers. No doubt his intention was to make it look like a heathen temple, and offer on its altars the vain idol sacrifices. But while engaged in this work of outrage he was struck with palsy, and died in great agonies. Bacchides then returned to the king at Antioch. Most probably the king had received the letter from the Romans enjoining upon him to keep the peace; a letter which came too late to benefit Judas, but was of service to his successor. It gave him time to regain his power in the country.

Demetrius was very cautious of the Romans. His long residence at their capital gave him some idea of their power. He was exceedingly anxious to have them acknowledge him as the king, and forget that he had once run away from them in the disguise of a hunter. He sent them a rich crown of gold as a present for their former kindness to him. He also sent them the murderer of their ambassador, and a Grecian grammarian who had too free a tongue against the Romans, but

they refused to let the crime against their nation pass in so easy a manner.

Jonathan had tidings that Bacchides was about to attack him again. He resisted the foe, destroyed certain traitors and conspirators, fortified his position, and finally expelled the invaders. He asked for an exchange of prisoners, and a league of peace. "So Bacchides thought this a pretty decent way of retiring home, and made a league of friendship with him," promising never again to make war against the Jews. He returned to Antioch, and never came back into Judea.

The patriotic party increased, and Jonathan established himself as the ruler of the country. He dwelt at Michmash, about nine miles from Jerusalem, and there governed Israel according to the law. When a man has power, he will soon have an array of friends flocking to him for assistance. Even enemies will court his favour. Sometimes, indeed, persecutors will ask the help of those whom they have before sought to drive from the land. Thus it became with Jonathan.

Demetrius was now ready to adopt the proverb, so often used by the oriental kings, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry." He became idle and vicious. He built a splendid palace near Antioch, and shutting himself up in it, with his evil associates, he refused to perform any of the duties of a king. All petitions, which the people presented to him, were refused. His doors were shut against the calls of charity, and the demands of justice. He was drunk at least half his time. This was more than the people could endure. They lost all confidence in him, and all hope of his reformation. A conspiracy was formed against him, but it failed. Another plan was devised by those who thought that the king must be dethroned.

A young man was found at Rhodes, who was ready for any scheme that might secure him a fortune. He was of a low character, unprincipled mind, and venturesome disposition, willing to sell himself for money, or for power. He pretended to be a son of Antiochus Epiphanes, and took the name of Alex-

ander Balas. He had great cunning, brazen impudence, and an imposing appearance. The conspirators persuaded him to play a bold part, and under their management, attempt to overthrow Demetrius, take his crown, and sit on his throne. He was dressed up, instructed how to behave in a princely style, and drilled thoroughly for the part assigned him in the national drama.

Several kings were in the secret, and they acknowledged Alexander as king instead of Demetrius. They sent him to Rome, where he imposed on the senate and gained recognition, favour, and assistance. The Romans, probably, were careful not to forget the hunting expedition of their last hostage, and were willing to have him entrapped by a cunning pretender. Unfair means are not always despised by the rulers of the earth. Alexander raised an army, seized Ptolemais in Palestine, and declared himself king of Syria.

Demetrius took alarm. It was no time for him to be lounging in a palace, and revelling in the vices of his times. He quit his castle,

and ceased his drunkenness. All the troops he could muster were soon collected together. Many of his bravest men were already hastening to join Alexander. He called some of the forces, placed over the Jews, immediately home. It now occurred to him that the Jews might take advantage of his former enmity towards them, and his present weakness without them, and join Alexander. Therefore, he began to act the part of a cunning fox, and he sent a letter to Jonathan, full of "loving words," as if he were calling on an old friend to prove himself friendly in this time of need. How very kind he proposed to be! He offered to let Jonathan alone, inasmuch as he had more work on his hands than he could well manage. He gave the Jewish general authority to raise a large army, promised him weapons, and allowed him to receive back the hostages which had been taken from his brethren and confined in the castle of Akra at Jerusalem. For these favours, he only asked, that Jonathan should aid him in defending his throne.

Jonathan could remember that when he was in need, Demetrius was not a friend indeed. He was not in haste to aid his persecutor. However, he made speed in taking advantage of the moment when the yoke was lifted, to be free, and to liberate his people from oppression. He hasted to Jerusalem, read the king's letter to the people, and to those who had possession of the castle of Akra. The Syrian garrison were greatly afraid when they learned that the king had given Jonathan such power. They at once delivered up the hostages, who returned to their parents and friends, declaring that the Jewish leader was the man for the times. They ceased to fight against those who returned to the city, to live peaceably in their dwellings, and worship in their temple. The Jewish people flocked now to Jonathan from all parts of the land. A large army was raised. The forces which Bacchides had placed in garrisons all over the country, finding that the popular tide was turning against them, left their fortresses and fled to Syria.

Only two garrisons remained; one at Bethsura, and the other in the castle of Akra. These garrisons were made up of apostate Jews, who had betrayed their friends, sold themselves to their foes, and renounced the worship of Jehovah. They were now in a desperate case, for there was no foreign land into which they could flee and dwell respectably among the people, nor would their own nation receive them as faithful citizens or soldiers. Therefore they held these places of defence, hoping, no doubt, for the Syrian army soon to return.

No promises were made by Jonathan to Demetrius. No preparations were made to render him assistance. No debt of gratitude was due to his persecutor, for the Jews were only gaining a part of their rights, and a part of what had been stolen from them. Few are the thanks which men pay to robbers, after being permitted to escape with life and crippled hands. Jonathan settled in Jerusalem, and began to repair the waste places, where the heathen had rioted in the city of the Lord.

The walls were rebuilt with solid and square stone, so as the better to resist the engines of war, when next the enemy should besiege Mount Zion. Again came gladness and hope to the homes and hearts of the people.

It is very flattering to find one's self of such importance, that rival suitors are begging for great favours. A king had paid court to Jonathan, and now the king's bitterest foe also courts his favour and his help. It must have astonished the Jewish general to be visited by an embassy of royal tone and apparel. They brought him a purple robe and a crown of gold. They saluted him as a noble prince and successful military commander, for it had been told Alexander that the Maccabean chieftains were men of noble blood, and were renowned for the resistance they had made to the oppression of kings who had attempted the utter destruction of their race. Then a letter was placed in his hands by the ambassadors.

“King Alexander to his brother Jonathan sendeth greeting: We have heard of thee,

that thou art a man of great power, and worthy to be our friend. Wherefore now we ordain thee to be the high-priest of thy nation, and to be called the king's friend: and require thee to take our part, and keep friendship with us."

Rival bidders never like to be out-done. Jonathan received another letter from the royal suitor of Antioch, for he was resolved not to be out-bidden by his rival. It is so strangely different from the former edicts of persecution that we here give it, in a slightly condensed form. It reveals the fox's smile.

"King Demetrius to the people of the Jews sendeth greeting: Whereas ye have kept covenants with us, and continued in our friendship, not joining yourselves with our enemies, we have heard hereof and are glad. Wherefore now continue ye still to be faithful unto us, and we will recompense you for all things ye do in our behalf. And now I do free you, and for your sake I release all the Jews, from tributes, from customs of salt, and from crown-

taxes:* Also from paying to me the third part of the seed, and the half of the fruit of the trees.

“Let Jerusalem also be holy and free from tithes and tributes. As for the tower [of Akra] I yield up my authority over it, and give it to the high-priest, that he may place in it such men as he shall choose to keep it. Moreover, I set at liberty every one of the Jews that were carried captives out of the land of Judea into any part of my kingdom, and I will that my officers pay back the tributes even of their cattle. All Jews in my realm shall celebrate their feasts and solemn days, without any molestation.

“I will also that there be enrolled among

* Grotius says: “The Jews were accustomed to present crowns to the kings of Syria: afterward there was gold paid instead of the crowns, and this gold was called crown-gold, or the crown-tax.” The letter of the king reveals the extent of his former oppression. He had ground the faces of the poor, and treated the people as his slaves. If he had been so severe in his prosperity, the Jews could scarcely expect him to be kinder to them in his adversity.

the king's forces about thirty thousand Jews, who shall receive the same pay as the men of the royal army. The people shall choose their own rulers from among themselves, and live according to their own laws. The city of Ptolemais and the land pertaining thereto, I give as a free gift to the sanctuary at Jerusalem for the necessary expenses of the temple. Moreover, I give every year twenty thousand shekels of silver, to the city, the temple, and the priests. For repairing the temple and the walls of the city, the expenses shall be given out of the king's accounts. Whoever shall flee to the temple, being indebted to the king, shall be at liberty."

Jonathan and his people gave no credit to this letter, nor accepted these fair offers, for they had not forgotten what evil the king had done to them in days whose light was scarcely gone, and whose trials still caused them to suffer. They were pleased with the offer of Alexander, because he was the first that really entreated peace with them, and his proposals were accepted. They probably believed that he

had some just claim to the throne, and, as he was a new man, they hoped for better treatment from him than they had received from his predecessors. It had been far better for them if they kept aloof from all offers made by contending parties. "Kindle not the coals of a sinner lest thou be burnt with the flame of his fire. Open not thy heart to every man, lest he requite thee with a shrewd turn."

CHAPTER XIII.

JONATHAN AMONG THE KINGS.

B. C. 153—146.

WHAT Jonathan did with the crown and the robes which Alexander Balas sent him, we know not, but he put on the holy robe, and became the high-priest. He did not assume this office merely because Alexander had conferred it upon him. He waited until the feast of tabernacles, when the people came to Jerusalem, and most probably was elected by them to this exalted dignity. At least he had their consent. It will be remembered that the regular high-priest, Onias, had been displaced by Alcimus, and had fled to Egypt, where he built a temple after the Jewish model. Onias was, no doubt, a lineal descendant of the family from which the high-priests were

to be taken, and next to this family may have stood that of the Maccabees, who were of priestly rank. Jonathan took the office, and it continued in the Asmonean family until the time of Herod, when one man was set up by one party, and another by an opposite party, according to the will of those who ruled over the land. Josephus is certainly mistaken in stating that Judas the Maccabee held the office of high-priest three years before his death.

Demetrius began to despair of his cause. The kings of the country, the Romans, and the Jews were against him. His own people so hated him, that many deserted him. Fearing the worst fate, he sent his two sons, Antiochus and Demetrius, to Crete, and there left them, and great treasures with them, in the hands of a friend called Lasthenes, so that they might be out of danger. We shall hear of them again.

Short was the contest for the throne. Alexander gained an easy victory. In the battle, Demetrius fought bravely, but his forces fled, and he was carried by his horse into a deep

bog, where enemies fell upon him without mercy, and wounded him without regard to the more honourable rules of war. If he had been a wise, temperate, and just king, he would not have excited such a fatal conspiracy against his throne. The price which he paid for his wickedness, was the desertion of his people, the loss of all power, and the victory of his rival over him. He lost his kingdom and his life, just as many a man loses his inheritance and dies by intemperance. He who resolves only to "eat, drink, and be merry," will live to no good purpose, and may die in disgrace.

Alexander sent word to Ptolemy, king of Egypt, that he was now king of Syria, and asked for a league of friendship with him. He also boasted somewhat of his right to the throne, and of his "progenitors," thus paving the way for this modest request: "Give me now thy daughter to wife, and I will be thy son-in-law, and will give both thee and her gifts according to thy dignity." Ptolemy granted these requests, and proposed to meet

the new king at Ptolemais.* Cleopatra was the name of the intended bride,—no relative, we suppose, of the notorious queen Cleopatra, who once had herself conveyed to Pompey by being shipped as a package of goods, who afterward befooled Antony, and at last took her own life in order to deprive Octavius Cæsar of the greatest trophy he had won in his conquest of Egypt.

* Ptolemais was built on the old site of Accho, Judges i. 31, and named after Ptolemy Soter. It was the point where many famous armies fought, and where kings met to form their treaties. "It was the pivot between Egypt and Syria, and seemed to have written over it, 'Let him take it who can!' Its inhabitants were constantly trembling, for they knew not which way their fortunes would turn. They had to act according to the Hebrew proverb, 'We must fall down before a fox in season.'" It is celebrated in the annals of the Maccabees, of the Crusaders, and of the English nation. St. Paul stopped there once for a day. Acts xxi. 7. For sixty days Napoleon I. besieged it, and was obliged to raise the siege. The present name is Acre. One would hardly expect much of it to be left, after 35,000 shells were thrown into it in 1832, and the explosion of a powder-magazine in 1840 laid it in ruins.

Jonathan was invited to the wedding-feast, by Alexander the king. The marriage was celebrated with great expense and display, "as is the manner of kings." Persons in the humbler walks of life have one advantage over those of royal blood—they may become acquainted with each other before they stand together to be united in marriage. But princes and princesses are often entire strangers before their wedding-day. Cleopatra had trouble enough after becoming the queen of Alexander, and probably wished many times that she had never heard his name.

Great honours were bestowed upon Jonathan at the feast. The two kings received rich presents from him, and, no doubt, the bride was presented with the most valuable of his gifts. But some uninvited company followed Jonathan to Ptolemais. "Certain pestilent fellows of Israel, men of a wicked life," came there to accuse him, but Alexander would not listen to them. The more charges they brought against the man, whom they ought to have respected, the greater

honour did the king bestow upon the accused. He fanned the flames of their own envy, hoping that they would destroy themselves by their own fire. He clothed his guest in purple, and placed him among the very chief of his friends, and with the princes. He also sent men to proclaim through the city, that Jonathan was not guilty of the charges which his slanderers were publishing on the streets, and that no man should complain against him or trouble him. His envious accusers saw that there was no chance for them to escape the king's wrath, if they lingered in the city, and they fled in haste. Jonathan was made general of the army in Judea, governor of Jerusalem, and a strong ally of Alexander. He returned to Jerusalem with peace and gladness.

There can be no doubt that Jonathan had too much to do with these heathen kings. The Lord had forbidden any alliances with the Gentiles, or any appeal to them for aid. The Israelites were to bow unto the Lord of hosts, and acknowledge Jehovah as their king and

deliverer. They were to consult him, and not put their trust in princes. They were to "Cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils." They should have said, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." The peace which Jonathan obtained from the kings of Syria did not save the Jewish nation from war.

Alexander Balas had selfish motives in seizing the crown. He imagined that a throne, a palace, Cleopatra and the royal luxuries could make him happy. He turned his attention chiefly to the most vicious indulgences, which money could buy or power command. He took no care of the government, giving the control of the court and the nation to Ammonius, a most insolent and cruel officer. This man put to death all the family of the late king whom he could reach. But there was one son in exile, bearing the name of his father Demetrius, who roused up, like an angry lion shaking his mane, to revenge the loss of his father's throne. He took the trea-

sure which his father's friend had left with him, hired a band of Cretans, crossed over into Cilicia, raised a great army, marched rapidly toward Antioch, and waked up Alexander from his seraglio to meet him on the battle-field. He was resolved to overthrow the usurper, and reign as Demetrius II., on the throne of Syria.

War came suddenly again upon Judea. Apollonius—a new foe with an old name—took up the cause of the rising claimant to the Syrian throne. Demetrius II. made him his general, and sent him to conquer the Jews, who were still allied to Alexander. Apollonius led a great army and encamped at Jamnia, not far from Joppa. He then sent an insolent message to Jonathan, saying, “Thou alone liftest up thyself against us, and I am laughed to scorn for thy sake. Do not sit still among the mountains and boast of thy strength. If thou hast any fighting men, come down into the plain and try the battle with me, for, take notice, the most valiant men of every city are with me, and the very

men who have beaten thy progenitors. Ask, and learn who I am, and who are with me, and they shall tell thee that thy foot is not able to stand before my face, for thy fathers have been twice put to flight in their own land. Come down now, and meet our horsemen in the plain where there is neither stone nor flint to cast at us, nor a place in which to hide."

Jonathan felt keenly this insult. Choosing ten thousand men, he left Jerusalem, and pitched his tents near to Joppa, where Apollonius had a garrison. He took this city, and entered its gates in the very sight of his bragging foes. The enemy endeavoured to draw the Jewish forces into the open plain, when the horsemen could easily fall upon them. But Jonathan let the horsemen weary themselves, tire their horses, and waste their darts and lances: then falling upon the footmen he routed the whole army. He drove many of them into Azotus, where they hid in a temple of Dagon, and others hid in the neighbouring towns. This temple and these towns were

fired by the Jews, and the few who escaped, were able to report a loss on the side of the enemy of nearly eight thousand men. Thus the proud defiant invaders learned, by death, or by flight, that he who puts the armour on should not boast as he that takes it off. Jonathan returned a victor, with great spoils. King Alexander rejoiced over his triumph, and sent him a buckle or button of gold, such as was then given to the king's best friends, and gave him Ekron for his own inheritance. The conqueror, no doubt, recalled the exploits of Samson in this region.

Soon after Ptolemy was passing through Azotus, on his way to render assistance to his son-in-law. It is said by the writer of first Maccabees, that he had "gathered together a great host, like the sand that lieth upon the sea-shore, and many ships, and went through deceit to get Alexander's kingdom and join it to his own." It seems that he discovered a plot laid by Ammonius, to take his own life, and he therefore resolved to take the throne from his son-in-law, and give it to Demetrius.

When at Azotus, the people came to Ptolemy and showed him what destruction Jonathan had made of their temple of Dagon, and the heaps of dead men in the streets and along the roads. They complained against the Jews, and wished the king of Egypt to make war upon them. But Ptolemy would not yield to their entreaties. Jonathan heard of the complaints, went in great pomp to Joppa, met the king, slept with him, (an unusual token of favour)! and explained his conduct towards the people who had suffered from his late victories. They parted as good friends, and Jonathan returned home, to wage war against the garrison in the citadel of Akra.

When Ptolemy came near to Antioch, he sent for Demetrius II., and they were united against Alexander. He promised to give him both the kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, and Cleopatra as his wife. So Cleopatra was taken from Alexander, and married to Demetrius II., on whose head were placed two crowns, the one of Egypt and the other of Syria. Alexander was driven out of the coun-

try, and was killed by one of the Arab chieftains, to whom he had entrusted his family, and who sent his head to king Ptolemy. This king died three days after, rejoicing over his son-in-law's death, and Demetrius II. became the ruler over Judea, as a province in his vast empire. He took the title of Nicator, (the conqueror,) and on certain coins that have been found, the title runs, "King Demetrius the god, Philadelphus, Nicator." The crown of Egypt was to him an empty honour, for he did not gain the throne.

A siege was carried on gallantly against the citadel of Akra, in which the apostate Jews still kept their garrison. Certain Jews who hated their own people, went to the new king and reported what Jonathan was doing. They hoped that the king would remember what resistance had been shown to him, when Apollonius was defeated, and take up the evil report against the Jewish patriots. But he seemed to despise them as traitors, and sent them home. He also sent letters to Jonathan, requesting him not to lay siege to

the tower any longer, and to hasten to meet him at Ptolemais. Jonathan however ordered the siege to go on, left able men to raise engines of war against the tower, and departed to meet the king. He chose certain elders and priests to attend him. Rich presents were carried, for he knew that he was running a great risk. He found favour in the eyes of the king, who promoted him as one of the royal favourites, confirmed him in the offices which Alexander had granted him, and made Judea free from tribute. All who offered sacrifices in Jerusalem were exempted from paying the crown-taxes, and the tax on their salt-pits, their grain and fruit. A copy of his decrees was ordered to be sent to Jonathan, and set up in the holy mount, where all could read it. It promised great favours, and ended with the declaration, "Nothing hereof shall be revoked from this time forth for ever."

Demetrius returned to Antioch, to play the fool in his wicked pleasures, and the cruel tyrant in his government, thus setting the hearts of the people against him, and, after

the example of his predecessors, paving the way for a new aspirant to seize upon his throne. Jonathan still pressed the siege against the tower, gaining no help from the king, who had forgotten his promises, and had given himself up to the most vicious indulgence. But a tempest was rising which would startle Demetrius, and frighten the garrison out of the citadel.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW KING AND NEW OUTRAGES.

B. C. 144—143.

THERE was a man of boundless ambition, named Tryphon, who kept an eye upon Demetrius II., noted his dissipation, and spared no pains to excite the people against him. He resolved to dethrone the king, and raise himself into power. Finding a young son of Alexander, he brought him from his Arabian guardian to Antioch, and asked the people to put the crown upon his head, a step which they were not slow to take, for they were thoroughly disgusted with the conduct of their king. Great excitement arose in the city. The streets were full of cries against Demetrius, and shouts for the young Antiochus, whom Tryphon was determined to place

on the throne, so that he might be the regent, and rule as he chose. The king knew not what to expect, for it seemed that the city had cast him off.

Jonathan now applied to the king to have the garrison in the tower of Akra removed, for he was not able to expel the lurking foe. Demetrius promised to do this and more, if he would send him some of the bravest of the Jewish forces, to assist in quelling the disturbances in Antioch. Three thousand strong men were sent. The king hailed their coming to his relief, as if they were his last and only hope. The whole city was in arms against him. It is said there were one hundred and twenty thousand armed men roaming through the streets, seeking the king and thirsting for his blood. They surrounded his palace, after these Jewish soldiers had safely entered its gates. They guarded every avenue and door. They demanded the surrender of their tyrant. The Jewish soldiers went up to the top of the palace, where no arrows or darts could reach them, and

thence shot at the crowd below. Thousands fell beneath the shower of arrows, darts, and stones cast down upon them. Thousands fled into the flat-roofed wooden buildings, and the Jews hastened to set these houses on fire. The flames spread rapidly through the city. The people were bewildered and ran crazily through the streets. The Jews, and certain Cretan soldiers who had been kept as a body-guard to the king, rushed forth, slaying the terrified inhabitants, and scattering the fires. Some leaped from the top of one house to another, applying the torch to the dry wood, or hurling men from the roofs. Such a day had never been known in Antioch. The men throwing down their weapons and grasping their wives, their children, or their goods, cried aloud to the king for peace. He ordered the Jews and Cretans to cease from the work of burning and of death. The people submitted to let him rule over them.

These Jewish soldiers, no doubt, were the more furious, because they remembered what evils they had suffered from the kings of An-

tioch in former days. They wished to visit the former violence against themselves, upon the heads of their persecutors. Their desperate courage saved the king from being dethroned. He honoured them during their stay in the city, and sent them home with great rewards, and fulsome promises.

Kings often forget the Josephs who help them to retain their power. Demetrius did not reform his course. None of the ashes of the city were put upon his head to denote his repentance of the former cruelty, tyranny, and licentiousness. None of his promises to Jonathan were fulfilled. No debt of gratitude was paid. He began to think that he would never again need his help, and therefore never need perform what he had bound himself to do. He illustrated the Jewish proverb, "The axe goes to the wood from which the helve was taken." He struck at the very heart of him from whom he had received his present power on his throne.

He withheld the money promised to the Jews, and actually demanded the taxes, tolls,

and tribute, from which he had once exempted them. He even threatened to wage war upon them if these revenues were not promptly paid into his treasury. This excited in the Jews the old enmity toward the Syrian throne, and led them to wait with anxiety for a change in the royal tyranny. Far better had it been for them, if they had let kings and usurpers fight their own battles, and had defended themselves as they best could, relying upon Jehovah for the favours of his providence, and the safety of his protection.

A change of kings soon came. Tryphon gathered an army, gained the favour of the people, proclaimed the child Antiochus king, and drove Demetrius from Antioch. Placing the young usurper on the throne, he gave him the title of Antiochus Theos, or "the god!" This young king sent a letter to Jonathan, recognizing him as the high-priest, and presented him with golden vessels, giving him "leave to drink in gold, be clothed with purple, and to wear a golden buckle." Simon, his brother, was made captain of all the

country along the sea-coast of Judea. Jonathan then led an army against the cities of Askelon and Gaza, subduing them by easy victories. The forces of Demetrius met him, at the lake of Galilee, and were defeated after a severe struggle. Simon also gained Bethsura, and put a garrison in it. Other fortresses were taken from the enemies who held them, and were put in a state of defence. The garrison in the citadel of Akra was at last forced to yield, and Jerusalem presented an appearance of peace, industry, and rejoicing. The exiles returned, rebuilt their walls and their houses. The regular worship was conducted according to the law, and the smile of the Lord seemed to rest upon the people.

Jonathan sent men to Rome to renew the friendship which Judas had before secured. The Romans treated the ambassadors honourably, and expressed their sympathy with them in all their trials. It is clear from this that the Romans became acquainted with the Jewish nation at an early day, and probably about this time several Jewish families sought

a home in that city. A letter was sent to the Lacedemonians, in Greece. It is interesting to notice that the "high-priest, elders, priests, and other people of the Jews," say in this letter: "We have the holy books of Scripture to comfort us," for these were better than any letters between them and other nations. Also, "we therefore at all times without ceasing, both at our feasts, and on other convenient days, do remember you in the sacrifices which we offer, and in our prayers, for it becometh us to think upon our brethren. We are right glad of your favour. As for ourselves, we have had great troubles and wars on every side, for the kings round about us have fought against us. However, we would not be troublesome to you, nor to other allies and friends, in these wars; for we have help from Heaven that aideth us, so that we are delivered from our enemies, and our foes are brought under foot."

The Lacedemonians replied that they regarded them as friends, and said "Your cattle and goods are ours, and ours are yours." In

later times many Jewish families were found in the towns and cities of Greece, and the apostle Paul found them in almost every place which he visited among the Gentiles.

Tryphon wished to put the young king to death, and place himself upon the throne, but he dared not attempt it lest Jonathan should make war upon him. He must first get rid of this powerful ally of Antiochus. Hence he provoked him to war. Jonathan marched against him with forty thousand men. They met, and Tryphon pretended to be at peace with him. He advised Jonathan to send back his army, and promised to go with him to Ptolemais, and persuade the people to submit to his authority. He declared that he would return home, and leave Jonathan in possession of all the country along the coast.

Jonathan believed the story, and retaining but a thousand men, sent the remainder into other parts of the land. He had several reasons for thinking that the people of Ptolemais through whose streets his name was once published in honour, would welcome his

arrival. But after he had entered the city, the gates were closed upon him, his men were slain or taken prisoners, and he fell by the basest treachery into the power of the enemy. Tryphon had laid the trap by which he was caught. The army of this traitor roamed through the land destroying the Jewish forces wherever they could meet them. Other nations fell upon them, now when their commander was a captive, and endeavoured to reduce them to the most degrading servitude. Nor was it long before Tryphon collected a great host to invade the land, and destroy every vestige of Judaism from the earth.

The people lamented Jonathan, and trembled lest their long series of oppressions and war should close by their own extermination. Simon hastened to Jerusalem, called the chief men of the nation together, and exhorted them to be courageous and hope for the best results. "Ye yourselves know," said he, "what great things I, and my brethren, and my father's house, have done for the laws and the sanctuary, as well as the troubles and the

battles we have seen ; by reason whereof all my brethren are slain for Israel's sake, and I am left alone. Now, therefore, be it far from me to spare my own life in any time of trouble, for I am no better than my brethren. Doubtless I will avenge my nation, and the sanctuary, and our wives and our children ; for all the heathen are gathered to destroy us in very malice."

These words brought good cheer and hope to the hearts of the people, and they answered with a loud voice, "Thou shalt be our leader instead of Judas and Jonathan thy brethren. Fight thou our battles, and whatsoever thou dost command, that will we do." The men of war hastened to enroll themselves in his ranks, and a large army marched forth to meet the invaders, on the plains not far from Joppa.

The crafty Tryphon did not care to give him battle. He sent word to Simon that he had arrested and held Jonathan only because he owed the king one hundred talents ; if the one hundred talents should now be paid over,

and two of Jonathan's sons delivered as hostages for their father's fidelity, he would set him at liberty. Simon seems to have thought that his brother was not alive, and now, overjoyed at the good tidings, and fearing lest a refusal of the proposed arrangement should cause his death, as well as bring upon himself a reproach from those who wished their brave commander at their head, he sent the money and the two children. But Jonathan was not delivered to his anxious people.

Tryphon retreated from the plains, collected more soldiers, and returned to lay waste the land. But wherever he attempted to cross the borders, he was met by an opposing force. The enemy had, in some way, got possession of the castle of Akra, and now the garrison sent word to Tryphon that they were short of supplies. A company of horsemen was despatched that very night to relieve the sufferers, but a great snow fell, and defeated the enterprise. Their general concluded that he had little prospect of success, if he must urge a winter campaign among the mountains, and

hence he retreated into the country of Gilead. He put Jonathan to death, and buried him at Bascama.

As Tryphon was now rid of the man whom he most feared, he thought there was nothing in the way of his secret designs. He therefore gave orders to have Antiochus Theos killed by stealth. Livy tells us that he bribed the physicians to report that he died of an incurable malady. His murderer declared himself king, but had great difficulty to persuade the people and other nations to recognize his royalty. He at first assumed great gentleness and calmness, thus winning the soldiers and the citizens of Antioch; but when they set him up as king he laid aside his pretensions and was the "true Tryphon." The Romans treated him with deserved contempt. He was exceedingly anxious to be acknowledged by them, and sent a splendid embassy, with a golden statue of victory, weighing ten thousand pieces of gold. They accepted the statue, but ignoring him as the donor, had the name of Antiochus inserted in the inscription,

as if the present had been made by him. The ambassadors of Simon were not treated with such dishonour. They were met as they came toward the city by an escort of men, and the Roman senate renewed their former expressions of good-will, writing them on tables of brass, to be preserved in the temple and read by all the people.

A sacred respect towards the dead was known among the Jews, from the time of Abraham. It was one of Simon's earliest noble deeds to remove the body of Jonathan to Modin, and there bury it beside his father and his brothers. He erected a large monument on an eminence, and seven smaller pyramids for his parents and their five sons. These white and polished monuments, adorned with the purest symbols of Jewish art, were standing for several centuries, where the sailor coasting along the regions of Joppa, could make them his sea-mark, and know how to direct his course.

CHAPTER XV.

JUDEAN INDEPENDENCE.

B. C. 143—135.

DEMETRIUS II. still claimed to be king of Syria. While his soldiers were fighting against the last usurper, he was lying idle at Laodicea, glutting himself with the lowest of human indulgences. Adversity made him none the wiser, nor did he appear to have the least sense of his misfortunes. It could not be expected that the Jews would court the favour of Tryphon, for they had severe experience of his treachery and cruelty. They now sought favour from Demetrius, because the Romans still recognized him as the king, and perhaps thinking that he would regain the throne, and almost forgetting how faithless he had been when he had sat upon it.

We may regret this step, but yet the fact remains.

Simon chose honourable men and sent them to this vile ex-king, with rich presents, asking from him a fulfilment of the old promises, and some protection from the ravages of the pretender who ruled in his stead. His answer was as follows :

“King Demetrius to Simon the high-priest, and the friend of kings, as also unto the elders of the nation, greeting : The golden crown and the scarlet robe, which ye sent unto us, we have received : and we are ready to make a steadfast peace with you, yea, we write unto our officers to confirm the immunities which we have granted. Whatever covenants we have made with you shall stand, and the strongholds which ye have builded shall be your own. As for any oversight or fault committed up to this time, we forgive it ; and the crown-tax which ye owe us, and all other tribute. Enrol your best men, and be at peace with us.”

The Jews regarded this as the year (142,

B. C.) when the foreign yoke was lifted from them. Instead of dating their deeds and contracts by the years of the Syrian kings, they now began to date them by the years of Simon and his successors. Simon did not interfere in the affairs of other nations, but directed all his energy to the building up of the Jewish kingdom. In a general assembly of the priests, elders, and people, he was made the sovereign ruler and acknowledged as high-priest. It was decreed that these two offices should descend through his family without limitation.

Simon made a journey through the land to secure the union of the people and a defence of their cities. He made Joppa the seaport of his kingdom, and it continued to be so for several centuries. He brought the city of Gazara (not Gaza, as in 1 Mac. xiii. 43) to terms, and cast out the idols from the houses, entering it with songs and thanksgivings, after the manner of Deborah and Barak. He built there a dwelling-place for himself, where he might lodge when the pub-

lic affairs should call him to that place. When his son John Hyrcanus proved himself a valiant man, he was made general of all the forces of Judea, and dwelt at Gazara, where he could superintend the public works and the trade at Joppa, as well as defend the country.

The soldiers in the citadel of Akra were so completely shut up, that they could not get supplies. When their rations failed them, and many had died of famine, they abandoned it, and fled for other lands. It was thoroughly cleansed from all heathen abominations, and the people entered with thanksgivings, carrying branches of palm trees, striking cymbals and the strings of the harp, and singing psalms of sacred joy. This thorn, so long in their sides, was removed, and the day of its evacuation was kept for many years with the renewal of its gladness. It seems, too, that afterwards a part of the hill on which it stood was levelled by incredible labour, so that it no longer commanded the hill of the temple. A part of the fortress was also demolished.

Numerous bands of exiles and captives returned to their native land, and tilled their ground in peace, or laboured at their trades with the good rewards of honest toil. The Jewish poets have celebrated the deeds and times of Simon with unstinted praise.

All his days was the land in peace,
For he sought the good of his nation.
The ancient men sat all in the streets;
They talked together of the wealth of the land;
The young men were joyous of heart,
They put on glorious and warlike apparel.
Every man sat under his vine and his fig-tree,
There was none to make him afraid.
He lifted the humble from their lowliness,
He searched out the laws of the Lord,
And the despisers of the law were removed.
He provided meat for the cities,
And gave them munitions of war.
His name was a name of renown,
It was known to the ends of the earth.
Happy the man who dealt with Simon!
And the people were pleased with his honours.
He restored the beauty of the sanctuary,
And Israel rejoiced with great joy.

The course of royalty at Antioch did not

run so smooth. As Tryphon had dethroned others, it was according to the established order of that kingdom, now his time to be dethroned and killed. Cleopatra and her children had been shut up in Seleucia, ever since she had been driven out of the palace at Antioch. She was fearful, lest the people there would give her up to the usurper, rather than support a siege out of love for her. Many of his soldiers had discovered that Tryphon was by no means so good and generous as he had pretended to be, and therefore came over to her party. Still they were not strong enough to support her in self-defence, or wage a war for the lost crown. Nor could her husband, Demetrius, afford any relief. He had shared far more romance of late than one of his disposition could heartily enjoy. In his attempt to conquer the Parthians, he had been captured by them, and was still a prisoner of war, in the hands of Mithridates. He had also married Rhodaguna, the daughter of his conqueror, and was living in the best style that his captivity would permit. Cleo-

patra looked for other aid, and for another husband. Demetrius had left a brother, Antiochus, in Rhodes, who, by this time, began to think of regaining the throne of his father, not for his brother, but for himself. This man inherited something of his father's taste for hunting, and became so successful in capturing a throne that he was surnamed Sidetes, or the Hunter.

Cleopatra sent a letter to Antiochus Sidetes, declaring that she would no longer be the wife of Demetrius, as he had married another, and offering to dispose of herself by marrying him, if he would seize the crown, and make her his queen. He accepted the proposal, married her, and took the name and style of the king of Syria. His first important step was to write as follows to Simon :

“King Antiochus to Simon the high-priest and prince of the Jews, and to the people, greeting: Forasmuch as certain pestilential men have usurped the kingdom of our fathers, and my purpose is to challenge it again, that I may restore it to the old estate; and

as I have gathered a multitude of foreign soldiers together and prepared ships of war, my meaning is to go through the country and be avenged on those that have laid it waste. Now, therefore, I confirm unto thee all the oblations which the kings before me granted thee, and whatsoever gifts they made to thee besides. I give thee leave to coin money for thy country with thine own stamp. Jerusalem and the sanctuary shall be free from tribute, and all the armour thou hast made, and fortresses thou hast built or gained, shall remain in thy power. If anything be, or shall be, owing to the king, let it be forgiven thee from this time forth for evermore. Also when we have obtained our kingdom, we will honour thee, thy nation, and thy temple with great honour, so that your glory shall be known throughout all the world."

About this time the Romans ordered all the nations over whom they held any power, to "Do the Jews no harm, nor fight against them, their cities or countries, nor aid their enemies against them. If there be any pes-

tilent fellows that have fled from Judea to you, deliver them to Simon, that he may punish them according to the law. They sent us a shield of gold, weighing a thousand pounds, and it seemed good to us to accept it." This letter was to prove of no benefit from Syrian quarters.

There was reason for the Jews to consider themselves in a state of independence and prosperity. Simon had money coined, and there are Jewish shekels yet preserved, having on one side "*Jerusalem the holy*," and on the reverse, the year of the reign of Simon the Asmonean. He now had great riches at his command, and lived in all the pomp of a monarch. The real aim of this new Antiochus was to get possession of Joppa, and to have a garrison in the troublesome castle of Akra. He intended that his flattery should cheaply purchase these advantages, and that his promises should pass for more than they were truly worth.

Simon heard from the throne-hunter again. Tryphon had been expelled from Antioch, and

was shut up in Dora, a town near to Ptolemais, where Sidetes was besieging him. Therefore Simon sent him two thousand chosen men, with silver, gold, and much armour. But Antiochus Sidetes refused to accept them. He was angry because the letter sent by the Romans, asking favour for the Jews, had been directed to Demetrius, whom the Roman senate still regarded as king of Syria. His wrath arose too when he thus learned that the Jews were to be protected by so great a nation. Moreover he had no need of the Jewish forces, for Tryphon escaped from Dora, and after seeking a refuge among the nations, was at last put to death in his native city. The new aspirant took the throne, and for nine years was king of Syria.

A messenger came to Jerusalem from the Syrian court, to confer with Simon. Instead of finding him poor and meanly provided as he expected, he was astonished at the wealth and splendour of the Jewish prince. The message was not the most friendly. The king had a short memory of the magnificent pro-

mises made when he needed help, and now his insolent demands were as follows, "Ye withhold from me Joppa, Gazara, and the tower in Jerusalem, which are cities of my realm. The borders thereof ye have wasted, and done great hurt in my land, and got the dominion of many places within my kingdom. Now, therefore, either deliver those cities and pay the tributes received from them; or give me, for them, five hundred talents of silver, and for the harm ye have done; and for the tributes already collected, pay me other five hundred talents. If not, we will come and subdue you in fight."

Some rulers would have sent the messenger howling home, but Simon gave him a reasonable and firm answer. "We have neither taken other men's land, nor held any property which belongs to others. We only hold that which belonged to our fathers, and which our enemies had in their power for a time. The people of Joppa and Gazara did us great harm in other days, but yet we will give an hundred talents for them. The tower of

Jerusalem we expect to hold, nor will we pay anything for the privilege."

The messenger left in wrath, and reported these words to his king, taking care to enlarge upon the grandeur of Simon's palace, and the strength of the holy city. The king resolved at once upon a war. He despatched Cendebeus with a considerable army to enter Joppa, take it from the Jews, and ravage the district around Jamnia. If this would not bring them to terms, he should invade Judea, take the people prisoners, and slay them, committing all manner of evil in the land. A strong man was however ready to meet him. John Hyrcanus and his brother Judas were called by their father, who reminded them what their brave uncles had done, and said, "I am now old, and you, by the mercy of God, are of sufficient age; go and fight for our nation, and may the help of Heaven be with you."

At Modin, where were the tombs of their grandfather and uncles, these young men rested with a strong force. When they rose

in the morning, and marched into one of the valleys, a great host of horsemen and footmen came dashing on to meet them in battle. A water-brook ran between the two armies, not far from which the enemy halted. John Hyrcanus crossed it, and his men followed. The trumpets sounded. Hand clashed with hand in the strife. The enemy were forced to retreat. Judas was wounded in the fray, but John rapidly pursued the invaders, drove them into the fated town of Azotus, and burned it to the ground. Those who fled to the towers in the country were ferreted out and slain. The brothers ceased not from the vigorous war, until the Syrians were driven from the land, when they returned victors to Jerusalem. The hand of Antiochus Sidetes was withdrawn from the Jews, but we shall see it again in one of the most infamous plots ever laid to destroy an old and innocent man.

The governor of Jericho was named Ptolemy. He was rich, and proud of the fact that his wife was the daughter of so noble a prince as Simon. In his ambition, he resolved to do

as others had done so often in Syria, and gain a crown by base intrigue, or wade through blood to a throne. No man was too good to be killed by such designing wretches, if his power might be wrested from him. He consulted with Antiochus, laid his plot, and waited for an opportunity.

Simon was visiting the cities of Judea, and giving them such counsel as his age and wisdom suggested. He and two sons came to Jericho. Ptolemy pretended much joy in receiving a visit from his father-in-law. He met his wife's relatives and invited them into a little castle which he had built. No evil was suspected. A feast was prepared, and all went on happily. Strong wine was brought, and the aged chieftain drank the health of his host. But just then there came rushing from a secret room, a band of armed men, who joined with Ptolemy in killing his father-in-law in the banqueting-place. His wife, and her two brothers were seized, imprisoned for a while, and then the eldest brother murdered. A part of the plot also was to kill

John Hyrcanus, in Gazara. Bribes were offered to his officers in the army, to come over to the Syrian cause. But John was warned and on the watch. He fell upon the band of assassins and slew them. Learning also that treacherous plans were laid against Jerusalem, he hastened thither and defeated his heartless brother-in-law. This bold murderer invited an army from Syria to invade the land, and establish him in its capital. The army came. Severe war followed, but Ptolemy, hated as a traitor by his instigators, was left to the fate he deserved.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN HYRCANUS.

B. C. 135—107.

THERE was no royal road to honour for John Hyrcanus. Like his noble predecessors he had to cut his way through difficulties, which would have caused most men to despair, before he could enjoy peace or the dignities of his position. While the people were still mourning his father's death, he was appointed by them high-priest, and prince of the Jews in his stead. They were hopeful of him as their ruler, for already had he exhibited much of the genuine Maccabean vigour and ability.

His first public measure was to march against Jericho, and avenge the murder of his father. What made this exceedingly painful was the fact, that his mother, sister, and bro-

thers were in the hands of this desperately wicked man. The attack upon the castle would have been more resolute, but for the fear lest they might suffer all the more. Ptolemy brought them upon the wall and threatened to cast them down headlong, if Hyrcanus did not raise the siege. He was almost inclined to draw off his forces, but his mother appeared on the wall, and spreading forth her hands, exhorted him not to spare the enemy of his country on her account. This noble-minded woman loved her nation and its cause more than her own life, and urged her son to act with all the more vigour as he saw her beaten and cruelly tortured. Death would be sweet to her, she said, if only her country's treacherous foe could be justly destroyed. Still Hyrcanus hesitated. His courage failed him when he saw these outrages inflicted on his own mother. The siege was raised, no doubt chiefly for this reason, although Josephus ascribes it to the coming on of the Sabbatic year, for the seventh year was observed as much as the seventh day. The question,

as to fighting on the Sabbath had been settled by the Maccabees long before, and this very year we find him engaged in war. Ptolemy soon fled from the land, and with the mark of Cain upon him, he wandered among the nations unbefriended, and was left to die in unrecorded disgrace:

The Syrian army came down "like the wolf on the fold," and overran the whole country. Under the warrant of their miserable king they plundered and burned at their will. They forced Hyrcanus into Jerusalem, and besieged it with might and main. Their ditches, blockades, and engines of war, made it impossible for any one to enter or leave the city. At one time, it is said, the inhabitants were almost perishing from thirst, when a plentiful rain supplied their wants. Again they were fearful lest their limited store of provisions would soon be consumed, and Hyrcanus proposed to place many of those who were of no assistance in the defence outside the walls, that they might, through the compassion of the enemy, escape into the country. But they

were not permitted to cross the entrenchments, and were afterward received back into the city.

Want grew into famine. The first autumnal moon announced that the feast of tabernacles* was at hand. But whence the joy of the festival? No branches of the goodly trees could be brought from the forests, of which to make those temporary booths, once used by their fathers in the wilderness; no countrymen could bring in the fruits of the field and the vineyard to enliven the thanksgiving with substantial gladness. How could they now draw water from their failing wells, and pour it out solemnly around their altars, expressive of the outgush of grateful hearts? (Is. xii. 3.) How could they observe the evening "rejoicing for the drawing of water," when usually in the court of the women, old and young, doctors and elders, scribes and rulers, had lightened a whole year's cares by music,

* See Ex. xxiii. 16; Lev. xxiii. 34-44; Neh. viii. 14-18. Our annual thanksgiving bears some similarity to this joyous feast.

and mirth, each one brandishing a flaming torch, or waving some branch of palm or willow or myrtle, and wildly dancing to the joyous song?* How could the clangor of arms give way to the tones of the harp, or the wail of the people be exchanged for the voice of melody? Hyrcanus asked of Antiochus a truce of seven days.

The king was strangely generous. For once he seemed to pay respect to religion, and the request was granted. For once he allowed his innocent enemies to celebrate their sacred rites of joy. And marvelously kind! he sent into the city a magnificent sacrifice, cattle with their horns gilded, all sorts of sweet spices, and cups of silver and gold. No advantage was taken when the soldiers brought these to the gates, by rushing in and laying waste the city. The Jews received the gifts,

* The Jews had added some peculiar ceremonies to these festivities. Perhaps our Saviour witnessed these services when in the city, (Matt. xxi. 8, 9, 15; John . xii. 12, 13,) and made them a means of deep spiritual instruction.

thanked their generous foes, and each party separated and the gates were shut. From the hundred three-storied towers raised by the enemy on the hill, not a missile was hurled, during the time of the truce. Antiochus feasted his army, while the Jews celebrated their memorial days. Here the heathen teaches the Christian how to fulfil that law, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." In this case the offending lion gives the innocent lamb the kind indulgence of life. Is it strange that the king received credit for piety towards God? One such act often blots out from the public mind a reign of tyranny, or a life of pestilent wickedness.

A treaty of peace was now proposed by Hyrcanus. His real condition was not known by the enemy, nor did he reveal the fact that his people was on the verge of starvation. Still Antiochus knew that they were in his power. There were advisers in his camp who pressed him to seize the fair occasion and exterminate the Jewish nation. They told him that the Jews were once driven out of Egypt as im-

pious wretches, hated by the gods and despised by men; that they were enemies to all the world, and would not eat nor drink, nor have fellowship with any other people; that they had laws, customs, and a religion entirely different from other people, and would not acknowledge the gods of the king; and therefore deserved to be treated with contempt, and even destroyed.

These stories had little influence with Antiochus. Perhaps it was not generosity, or justice alone, that persuaded him to make a treaty. Urgent demands came to him for his presence at home. The Parthians were ready to seize upon his throne, on the pretence of giving to Demetrius, their prisoner, the crown. He must hasten to make war against them. It was policy then to treat with Hyrcanus and make him a friendly ally, rather than leave him a revengeful enemy. The treaty was made. The Jews were to lay down their arms; pay tribute for Joppa, and other cities on the borders; acknowledge their dependence on Syria; remove certain defences from the walls

of Jerusalem, and, as they refused to admit a garrison of Syrians into the old castle of Akra, they were to pay five hundred talents to the king; paying three hundred down, and giving the hostages required, one of whom was the brother of Hyrcanus. These terms were hard, yet less exorbitant than might have been expected. They were left to choose between two evils. Such a peace was better than starvation and a complete surrender to tyranny. The tide of their independence had receded, and the Jews were left again upon the blistering sands of adversity.

Four years after, (B. C. 131,) Hyrcanus was summoned to march with his king into Parthia, under the pretence of delivering Demetrius, who had seen the depths of degradation since he had exchanged the crown for the yoke. Several times he had almost escaped; twice he had been caught in his flight, and worse and worse did the yoke gall his neck. The splendid attention paid him was only magnificent mockery; it was only gilding the chain that tethered him to the stake in a fat but wear-

some pasture. Antiochus led an army of 80,000 men against the Parthians. The army revelled in luxury along the way. Gold and silver glittered on every thing, even on the boots of the soldiers. The wares of the table were silver, as if they were marching to a feast, rather than to a war. What wonder then if Hyrcanus returned from this glittering campaign with spoils and the glory of battles !

Antiochus was slain, and his army was so utterly demolished that scarce any escaped to carry home the sad news of the slaughter. Hyrcanus did not hear of it for some time after he was sharing the honours of his people, and laying plans to restore them to the lost independence. He lamented the king's death, for it appears that toward the close of his reign he had kinder intentions toward Judea than any of his predecessors since Antiochus the Great. One pleasing anecdote is related of him by Plutarch. In his hunting, he once lost himself, and came upon a cottage of some poor people who received him in the best manner they could, without knowing who

he was. At supper the conversation turned upon the king, and that too by his own ingenuity. They said that he was a very good king in everything else, but that he had too great a passion for hunting. It caused him to neglect the affairs of his kingdom, and place too much confidence in his courtiers, who did not always fulfil his intentions. Antiochus made no reply at the time. The next day his companions found him at the cottage, and then he was known. He repeated what had been said, and then rebuked his attendants, before the cottagers, saying, "Since I have taken you into my service, I have not heard the truth concerning myself until yesterday." How vast the difference between truth in a cottage and flattery at a court!

While the Syrians were in tears, bewailing the loss of their king, and the soldiers who had relatives in almost every house, Demetrius was making great rejoicings over the recovery of his throne: and strange to everybody but the royal families of those corrupt days, Cleopatra returned to be again his

queen. Syria soon became, like a greatly excited mob, divided into parties, and each party fighting for itself. John Hyrcanus let them alone in their quarrels, and improving the moment, threw off the Syrian yoke, so long resisted by the Maccabean family. He gained several important cities. The Idumeans were conquered and became Jews, thus losing their name in that of their adopted nation. A large army of defence was supported in the land. It is hardly possible that there was a large amount of gold, as Josephus says, in the tomb of David, which for nine hundred years had lain untouched, nor that Hyrcanus took thence the money to sustain his cause. The story probably originated in the fact that Herod once wanted an apology for such a deed, and pretended that he had the example of Hyrcanus. Wealthy men may have hidden money there in Herod's day, to keep it from his grasp, and he, learning this, broke up the tomb and took what he could find. Judea regained her independence, and was never afterward under the

Syrian dominion. The Roman power, whose good will she was now seeking, finally destroyed this independence and became her master.

The noblest deed, in the eyes of his countrymen, ever performed by Hyrcanus, was the capture of Sichem, that nest of enemies to the Jews for centuries, and the total destruction of the rival temple near Mount Gerizim. This temple had been built by the Samaritans, who were but the relics of the ten revolting tribes, and are first mentioned as the "adversaries of Judah and Benjamin." They were a half-heathen, half-Jewish people. When Ezra and Nehemiah were rebuilding the temple and the walls of Jerusalem, after the return from Babylon, these Samaritans came down to the city and said, "Let us build with you," but the Jews refused because of the semi-heathenism of their neighbours. Afterward some of them looked on the work, and mocked the builders; they even opposed the Jews with the bitterest malice, joining the other enemies of the people of God. (Ezra

iv. 2; Neh. iv.) They then retired to the mountain of Samaria and built a temple, claiming that it was the place where men ought to worship. They still held to the five books of Moses, and observed most of the ceremonies of the Jewish law. But they hated the Jews and the Jews hated them. Each applied terms of the utmost scorn and detestation to the other. One would not touch the other, if he could help it, nor take a cup of water from his hands, though almost dead on a desert road, unless he were of so noble and charitable a spirit that he could forgive his neighbour. How striking is the parable of our Lord, which answers the question, "Who is my neighbour?" There he is! A Samaritan, good enough to recognize the robbed and half-dead traveller, and administer to him the kindest attentions. You have repaid hate with hate, insult with insult, and wrong with wrong, long enough. Be neighbours now!

Long had the Samaritans provoked the Jews. Every runagate and traitor could find a

refuge among them. They played into the hands of every foe stronger than themselves. If the Jews were in power, and were to be feared, they put forth their claim to a Hebrew origin. They too were Jews at such times! But when the Syrians were to be feared, they then asserted their descent from heathen tribes, for their fathers had been heathen transplanted into Samaria. (See 2 Kings xxvii. 24-41.) They were ever guilty of this double-dealing, and were never "friends in need and friends indeed." When Antiochus Epiphanes decreed that all nations under him must adopt his false religion and his idols, the Samaritans gave the old Athenius a home among them, where he could teach them idolatry, and they dedicated their temple to the Grecian Jupiter. It was devoted to "Jupiter the protector of strangers," intimating that they were strangers in a Jewish land, and not of the race of Israel. When Matthias and Judas were fighting for God and fatherland, these neighbours were holding fellowship with idols. No wonder, then, that the

hatred between Jew and Samaritan continued in the time of Hyrcanus. It lasted until after our Saviour's day, for then "the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans."*

Hyrcanus had a right to the country of Samaria, according to the laws of nations. It had been often granted to his predecessors, in the treaties with the Syrian kings. He therefore resolved to claim and conquer it. But the real motive was, no doubt, the determination to put an end to the rivalry between its temple and the temple at Jerusalem. For two hundred years it had shocked the devout Jew as he passed by it; on his way to the true altars of Jehovah, and now when

* John iv. 9; Luke ix. 53: For a better state of things produced by the gospel, see Acts viii. 16-25. Philip was reaping what our Lord sowed by his words to the Samaritan woman, and to the people of the city. The Jewish converts then began to learn that Samaritans might be saved as well as they, for there were many believers in Christ. Thus Jesus broke down the "middle wall of partition" between these mutually repulsive people. Christian love can make neighbours to be as brethren.

the holy temple resumes its ancient dignity, the rival must be destroyed. Hyrcanus thought that true religion required its demolition, and leading an army thither, to punish the people for some late crimes, he laid it in the dust.

Many years after this, John Hyrcanus again besieged the city of Samaria, because the northern kings were endeavouring to wrest it from his hands. For a long year he kept his army around its walls, and his foes were not able to drive him away. At last the suffering enemy delivered themselves into his hands, abandoned the city, and he not only pulled down the houses and walls, but made its site like a marsh. The most vigorous springs poured their streams down the hillsides, and when trenches were dug through the streets, and embankments built up on the lower side of the walls, the ground on which the detested city had stood, was flooded, and became a pool of water, (B. C. 109.) The Samaritans, after these years of desolation, returned to a purer form of worship, and had

an altar on Mount Gerizim. They never went to Jerusalem for sacrifice. The city was rebuilt by Herod, and called Sebaste.*

After this victory, John Hyrcanus became master of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. He was esteemed as one of the most able princes of his age, and none of his neighbours dared to cope with so energetic a foe. The land was not troubled any more with foreign wars during his life. The kingdom had not em-

* In certain events, which led to the destruction of Samaria, by Hyrcanus, Cleopatra had a hand. She had not lived long with Demetrius II. after his return to Antioch. Being in trouble, after his second expulsion, he fled to Ptolemais, asking her protection. She despised the dethroned king, recalled Rhodaguna to his mind, and shut the gates against him. He fled to Tyre and was slain. One of her sons grew powerful, and began to eclipse her in authority, and she was angry, for her ambition was to make herself absolute ruler of Syria. She mixed a cup of poison for him, but he, suspecting the intrigue, compelled her to drink it, and one of the plagues of Syria was soon a corpse. She had been the wife of three kings of that country, and the mother of four. The epitaph on the whole family should have been, "The way of transgressors is hard."

braced so much territory since the days of Solomon. No man, for centuries, did so much to gain adherents, or proselytes, to the Jewish religion. He, as a warrior, wished the conquered tribes around him to submit to the national laws, and renounce idolatry. Those who gave up their idols, and heathen superstitions, and observed certain rules of moral life, were permitted to dwell in the Jewish cities, as "strangers within the gates." (Exod. xx. 10.) These were called "Sojourning proselytes," or "Proselytes of the gate." They were allowed to worship in the outer court of the temple.

As the high-priest Hyrcanus wished the Gentiles to adopt the Jewish religion, submit to all its requirements, and observe all its ceremonies. Those who did this were called "Proselytes of Righteousness." None were refused who were willing to come thus into the Jewish church. They became naturalized Jews. Besides the prescribed forms of their law, baptism was undoubtedly administered to the new converts. When John the Baptist

began to baptize men, the people seemed to understand what baptism was, as if it had long been practised. The rite was old, but the purpose for which it was administered was new. It was no longer to introduce them into the Jewish church, but prepare them for the kingdom of heaven. Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was afterward appointed as one of the means by which persons are to be admitted to the privileges of the Christian church.

The Jews continued to be zealous to gain converts to their religion. They were ready to "compass sea and land to make one proselyte." (Matt. xxiii: 15.) It is not wrong to make proselytes in the proper way, and to the truth and the worship of God. It is not wrong to persuade men to obey the gospel. Many proselytes appeared at the feast of Pentecost, (Acts ii. 10,) and were truly converted to Christ.

A large public building, often mentioned in the New Testament, was doubtless begun,

or erected by the order of John Hyrcanus. It was the Baris, or castle, on Mount Moriah, joining close upon the temple. It stood on the same spot, where had stood, so long, the troublesome castle of Akra, for years kept full of deadly enemies. After the Roman conqueror, Antony, had overrun the east, it was called the Castle of Antonia. It was in a part of this castle, or the palace adjoining, that our Lord was, when he was led into the Judgment Hall. (John xviii. 28.) On the stairway leading into it, Paul stood and addressed to the people a plain defence of himself, and a powerful sermon to the hardened people who had arrested him, beaten him, and were about to kill him, when the chief captain of the temple rescued him from the mob. (Acts xxi. 34.) In some apartment of this castle he slept, and in the night the Lord stood by him.

The very sects of Jews whom Paul met in Jerusalem, and by whom the persecution was urged on against him, were older than John Hyrcanus, and gave him the most serious

trouble of his life. He was a Pharisee, just as Paul had been. This strong party became envious of Hyrcanus, as they afterward were of our Lord and of the apostles. He was once at a banquet, in his old age, and there he asked the Pharisees to tell him in what respect he had violated the strict rules of their sect, and give him any instructions they were pleased to bestow. They all applauded his conduct, as a religious ruler, except one man. One voice alone, that of Eleazar, broke the general harmony. He insultingly charged him with having no right to the office of high-priest, and dared to tarnish the name and honour of his mother. This was more than Hyrcanus could bear. He demanded that Eleazar should be tried for defaming him. But the Pharisees would not arraign him. They shielded him, or, at least, administered only a slight rebuke. Hyrcanus then suspected the whole party of intrigue and desertion.

While nettled by these troubles, a zealous disciple of the Sadducees, named Jonathan,

whispered in the ear of Hyrcanus that a conspiracy was formed against him. Jonathan invited him to join his party. The Sadducees, at this time, do not seem to have denied the resurrection of the dead as they did afterwards. They simply opposed the doctrine, that the additions made by the Rabbis to the law of God were of binding force. They referred back to Simon the Just, and would not accept the "traditions of the elders." To this party Hyrcanus now passed over, and therefore fell under the ban of the chief rulers of the nation. He died the next year, having been high-priest and prince of the Jews twenty-nine years. The popularity of the Maccabean family ceased with this prince, for the people never forgave his alliance with the Sadducees. These men of rank and pleasure—the epicureans of their nation—were not esteemed as guardians of the rights of the people.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE AFTERNOON OF JEWISH LIBERTY.

B. C. 107—63.

THE sun of Judean glory was rapidly sinking toward the night. The people proved themselves unworthy of the independence gained by their Maccabean princes, and left to them with a recovered land, a restored capital, a purified temple, an array of strong defences, and an honourable name. No foreign enemy rose to vex them. No oppressive taxation and tributes hindered them from prosperity. No teachers of idolatry were forced upon their cities. They appeared more outwardly devoted to religion than for many generations. But there was little of pure heart-service and zeal for the Lord of hosts. We shall not attempt to sketch their

history in full, down to the days of Herod the king; we simply take a few observations as their sun goes down, never more to rise, until the Lord again shall make Jerusalem the joy of the earth.

The oldest son of Hyrcanus was Aristobulus. He learned that his father had left the government, by his will, in the hands of his mother, that she might select from her sons one to be the governor and high-priest. But he grasped the rod of power, seized his mother, put her in prison, and starved her to death. He chose the brother next in age to himself, to assist him in the government, and shut the others up in prison, on scanty fare and closely guarded. In this wretched beginning we see that the idea of a theocracy, or government by Jehovah, is utterly discarded.

This cruel prince wished to live like a king, and he certainly imitated most of the kings of those days in his first measures. He was not willing to wear only a simple badge of office as his predecessors had done. He discarded the mitre of his fathers, and took a

royal crown. No one of his people since the Babylonish captivity had worn a diadem. He also fortified the palace, (a part of the castle built by his father,) to make it appear that his grand life was in danger, just as other kings did for self-protection. He had his seraglio and his flatterers. Through an underground walk, from the palace to the temple, he passed to minister in holy offices, but his worship must have been only daring mockery.

He aspired to be a conqueror. His first military expedition was made against the Itureans, the descendants of Itur, (Jetur, Gen. xxv. 15.) They dwelt toward Damascus, in a country once claimed as a part of the land of Israel. Disease attacked him, and he returned home, leaving his brother Antigonus to carry on the war. Antigonus returned triumphant, having made proselytes of the Itureans. The wife of the prince, who affected the style of a queen, told her sick husband that his brother was plotting against him. By buzzing her slanders hourly in his ears, she

caused him to grow jealous, especially when he learned that Antigonus had entered the temple with his glittering armour on, to pay his devotions on a holy day. The prince sent word to him to put off his armour and hasten to him, along the underground passage. Guards were sent there to murder him. But the queen bribed the messenger to deliver quite a contrary message, which was, that he should come with his armour on, and display it to his brother. He obeyed, and was met in the dark way and slain. The prince was shocked at his own horrible deed and vomited blood. He sent some of the blood to a physician for examination, and the servant spilled some of it accidentally, on the very spot where the dead man lay. Thus the blood of these brothers was mingled on the pavement. Aristobulus heard the cry of horror ringing through the halls, and learning what had occurred, he exclaimed in an agony of remorse, "Praise the just judge, who has shed the blood of the oppressor over that of the oppressed." He soon expired; an example of

the righteous judgment of God upon the man who outraged his sacred office, and imitated the worst of tyrants. When such men rule, the darkest times must come, and the direst calamities fall.

His wife, Salome, now released the three brothers from prison, and the oldest of them took the kingdom. This was Alexander Jan-næus. His next brother made an attempt to supplant him, and was put to death for treason. This man was an enterprising, rather than a successful prince, and fortunately for him, his neighbours were at war, and could not immediately attack him. He was ambitious, and gained some of the frontier cities from the warring kingdoms of Syria and Egypt. He was by profession a Sadducee, and the Pharisees opposed him, and cried down his successes. Once when officiating as high-priest at the feast of tabernacles, the people grossly insulted him. They pelted him with citrons, slandered his family, called him a slave, and would have driven him from the temple, had not his courage been equal to

the trying occasion. He called for the armed guards, and ordered them to attack the mob. They fell upon the unarmed crowd, and slew some thousands of them before they would sue for mercy. To guard against another such assault, he surrounded the altar and inner temple with a wooden wall, so that priests and people were separated when the solemn worship was performed. This aroused the Pharisees more bitterly against him. They dwelt on the right of the people to witness the priestly services, and the people are always easily excited, when they think that their rulers infringe upon their rights. Jannæus would not yield his point. He bore heavily on his opposers. He hired a class of foreigners, who, in those times were ready to fight for the one who would pay them most, and with these mercenary soldiers, he protected himself, and held irresistible sway. It is said that in this civil war, which lasted for six years, nearly fifty thousand Pharisees were slain. This party declared they would accept peace with him only on condition that he

would first cut his own throat ! They secured the assistance of the Syrian king, and Jannæus was routed with the loss of six thousand hireling troops. He fled to the mountains, and resorted to strong drink to drown his despair ! The tide however turned in his favour, for there is a disposition among men who have hated a man, to change their rage to pity, and then their compassion to respect. Jannæus returned to Jerusalem at the head of sixty thousand men, and resumed his authority. Under his iron sway peace was restored to the country, on which (for a wonder !) no foreign nation had sprung up to plunder and subdue. By a vigorous policy he held the whole country together, so that his power was acknowledged from Lebanon to the borders of Arabia. He had learned how to govern others, but had forgotten how to govern himself. Intemperance was, and is still, a rare crime among the Jews. Do you often find a drunkard now among the dispersed race of the Hebrews ? But Jannæus was a drunkard. The quartan ague was upon him in a most

racking form. Its fevers increased as he resorted to the burning cup. He saw that he must soon die. His conscience was past being roused, and his heart was past feeling, no doubt, because stupefied by drunkenness. He expressed no regret, no terror, no remorse. He ordered his body to be embalmed, kept in the palace, and the fact of his death concealed, until his wife Alexandra could gain the favour of the Pharisees. She followed his orders, and so gained the good will of this strong party, that they permitted her to bury her husband in the style of a prince, and to give direction to the affairs of the nation. Alexander Jannæus reigned twenty-seven years, B. C. 105-78.

Alexandra was so disposed to let the Pharisees have their will, that the throne stood secure, and the land enjoyed a general quiet from foreign troubles. But this clamorous party were not satisfied with calling home their exiled friends, and releasing their imprisoned relatives. They demanded justice from those who had aided the late king in

banishing, imprisoning, and slaying such numbers of their own party. In their revenge, they destroyed many of their opponents. For a time terror reigned among the Sadducees. Alexandra was obliged to submit to this evil, rather than introduce a far worse one in the form of a second civil war. These two great bodies of men are to be regarded, not merely as religious sects, but as vigorous political parties, from this time forward, until the destruction of Jerusalem.

In the fifth year of Alexandra, (B. C. 72,) the oppressed party, led by Aristobulus her younger son, appealed to her for relief from the intolerable severities inflicted upon them. They asked one of three things: to put a stop to these rigours, or to allow them to seek a home in other lands; or to place them in the fortresses of the country so that they might be out of reach of the enemy. She could do the first, for the Pharisees had their way. If she allowed them to settle in other lands, she would have no forces to help her, nor any to protect her in case she should be assailed.

Therefore she wisely distributed them through the garrisons of the realm, so that they could not only be armed against their oppressors, but also be as a standing army for her service if the occasion should require. Aristobulus, restless and ambitious, daring and full of intrigue, was kept out of mischief at home, by sending him abroad to make war upon Damascus. This city, the oldest upon record, which still stands, yielded to him, and by his victory he won the affections of all his army, thus preparing himself to take the reins of government.

Alexandra died (B. c. 70) in the seventh year of her reign, aged seventy-three years. From her childhood she seems to have been familiar with the events of the Maccabean period of Jewish history. The exploits of Judas were the proud tidings she eagerly listened to when a child, and the independence of the nation had been the ardent hope of her youth. Wise, prudent, and energetic, she escaped the fatality of treason, and checked every tendency to civil war, of which

the nation had a bitter taste in the time of her husband. Her older son, Hyrcanus, was the high-priest during her reign. He took sides with the Pharisees, while Aristobulus was the leader of the other party. Each of the brothers was claimed by the contending parties as her successor.

Aristobulus was more resolute and ambitious than his quiet brother. He foresaw what was planned for Hyrcanus, and while his mother was on her death-bed he secretly left Jerusalem, in the night, and visited the garrisons, in which his friends had been placed. He was gladly welcomed by them, and in fifteen days twenty of these fortresses put themselves under his authority. This made him master of the kingdom. The regular army also declared for him, and the people were ready for a change, because the Pharisees had ruled with a rod of iron. They flocked to him from all quarters, ready to crown him at his will. He marched rapidly toward Jerusalem, as soon as he heard of his mother's death, for whom he scarcely shed a tear.

The Pharisees were resolved that he should tarry at Jericho until his political beard had grown, and let his older brother wear the crown. They placed Hyrcanus nominally at their head, seized the wife and children of Aristobulus as hostages, in order to create in his mind a terror of fighting those who could revenge themselves on his family. Their forces were volunteers, hastily enrolled, and little attached to their leaders. The most of them deserted, or rebelled, and fled to the bold and enterprising Aristobulus, in whom their hearts and hopes were centered. The battle at Jericho was but the foolish attempt of disorderly weakness against organized power. The remaining volunteers who had sallied out of Jerusalem in all excited zeal, hastened back with overheated ardour. Hyrcanus had little to regret. He was not disposed to fight his brother from the first, nor did he covet the crown. He loved ease and quietness more than public responsibility. He yielded the sovereignty to the resolute aspirant, and retired to the happier station of

private life. Thus ends the political rule of the Pharisees, for Hyrcanus falls into the hands of another master, who works the last great and fatal revolution in Judea, before her downfall.

A child has been born who is destined to make an uproar in the world, and be mentioned in the book of inspiration. His name is Herod, yet to be called the Great. His father is now paving the royal road for his son, and to them we devote a little attention. This man is an Idumean noble, named Antipater. Some claim that he is a descendant of one of the influential Jews, who returned from Babylon after the captivity. Others, to blast his Jewish pretensions, assert that his father was a sexton in a temple of Apollo at Askelon, and being stolen by some thieves of Idumea, when a child, he became a slave in that country. It seems, from Josephus, that he was one of the proselytes to Judaism, when John Hyrcanus reduced that people to submission, and engrafted them upon the Hebrew nation. It is not hard to discover why Josephus be-

stows upon him unmerited praise. He was under the lion's paw, and wrote to please his rigid master.

This man Antipater has resolved to obtain power. If he cannot be a king, he will be next to a king. If position is not to be cheaply bought, he will pay the usurper's price. He is well acquainted with the contented Hyrcanus, who has given up all hopes of greatness. He was educated with him in the court of his father. He is well versed in Jewish politics, and thinks he knows how to manage Jewish parties. For years his heart has been fixed upon seeing Hyrcanus in the throne, and himself prime minister and state manager. But the prospect of his ever engineering the government has lately been dashed with forbidding colours. He knows that he can never work himself into the favour of Aristobulus, and hence all his craftiness, which goes down fox-like to the third generation, (Luke xiii. 32,) is employed in repairing the broken fortunes of Hyrcanus.

He first resorts to Aretas, king of Arabia

Petrea, and engages him to furnish an army for his undertaking. Into this army he persuaded many of the Jews to cast their fortunes. To remunerate Aretas, he promised him several cities lost in the wars with Jannæus. A brother, Phalion, is not disposed to join in this infamous scheme of usurpation, and he takes sides with the royal party.

The greatest difficulty is to arouse Hyrcanus himself to second this plot. He is willing to let his name sink below the surface of history, and cannot feel that he has any rights worth vindicating, or wrongs worth avenging. How disinterested Antipater appears! as if he had generously undertaken the labour of securing to this defrauded friend his lost rights! And yet this humble good-hearted friend cannot perceive that he has been greatly injured! He tells the easy-minded, unsuspecting Hyrcanus, that if he will not have his foot on a throne, his brother's foot will soon be upon his neck, he must choose between reigning and dying; and that he is not safe a single day if he remains in Judea.

At last his fears are awakened, and leaving Jerusalem by night, as if in danger, he flies to Aretas for safety.

An army of fifty thousand men is marched toward Jerusalem. Hyrcanus has begun to think that he is an injured man, and takes more than his usual interest in his future prospects. The Pharisees are ready to hail him as their king, and many of them now hasten to join his ranks. Aristobulus meets the invaders, but hosts of his fickle soldiers desert him, and the rest lose their courage. The king is defeated, and seeks refuge in Jerusalem. The invaders pursue, enter the gates, which the people are ready to keep open, and force the king to shut himself up in the temple and the castle. The priests remain constant, and endure the siege with their prince. Neither party is prepared to endure a long siege. Scanty stores are laid up in the castle, and the besiegers cannot draw their supplies from the neighbouring country, for the harvests have been cut off, and the people are dreading a famine.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUNSET.

B. C., 63—37.

FOR three months the siege was pressed, without much change. The party of Hyrcanus, or rather of Antipater, for he is the father of all this violence, committed such outrages in Jerusalem, that many of the chief Jews fled from the horrors of domestic war. The Lord did not now dwell in his temple as of old. The light was fading away from Jerusalem, and the cloud from a dark land was rising over the tabernacle. We shall hear no more of the independence of Judea; no more of wise and saintly rulers, nor find unselfish and generous kings upon the throne. After this closing scene in free Judea, we must write with hesitating pen,

“Judea capta,” and say in regretful words, “The glory has departed.”

The time for the Passover came. Aristobulus and the priests, being shut up within the walls around the temple, continued to offer sacrifices as long as they could. They let down baskets from the walls with money in them, and those who were outside sent up lambs in return. But at last the besiegers, either suspecting that those lambs were intended merely as food to the famishing, or designing to insult them, took the money from the baskets, and sent them back empty, or loaded with swine, which the Jews would neither eat nor offer on their altars. This offensive act proved that the Pharisaical party were contending only for selfish purposes, and were ready to insult the very altars and the religion for which they pretended to be so zealous.

The Pharisees of the city went to an old man named Onias, who was esteemed for great piety, and was said to have prayed for rain in a time of drouth, and the rain immediately

fell in great abundance. They brought him into the army, and wished him to curse the prince and the priests in the temple. It was like Balak's employing Balaam to curse Israel. He refused at first, but at last consented to offer a prayer. The people gathered about him, and the old man lifting his hands toward heaven, prayed thus : "O Lord God, ruler of the universe, here are thy people set against thy priests, and thy priests against thy people ; I pray thee not to hear the prayers of either party against the other." For the old man loved his nation more than any sect or party, and wished the strife to end in peace. In all civil wars there are some devout men who rise above party feelings and pray for a just and honourable reconciliation. But the Pharisees were in a rage. They stoned him to death !

While each of these foes, in most revengeful bitterness, is looking for help against the other, we turn the eye from the horrors of the siege, and glance toward Rome, for Rome is setting her eyes covetously upon Judea.

In the time of Alexander Jannæus, two natural orators were born in Italy: Cicero and Pompey. (B. c. 107.) They each served for a while under Sylla, who declared in his epitaph, that no man ever exceeded himself in doing good to his friends, nor evil to his foes. Cicero gave up war for oratory, but Pompey forsook oratory for war, and threw all his heart into the work of a conqueror. He was ambitious and artful. One man lost his life by saying of his power over the people, "Pompey is just come from under the hands of the pedagogue, and on a sudden plays the demagogue among you." He assumed the office of a general, and Cicero wrote to Atticus, "Our friend Pompey is wonderfully desirous of obtaining a power like that of Sylla: I tell you no more than what I know, for he makes no secret of it." He was proud of his ability. Once he was seen, splendidly arrayed, coming toward the tribunal, leading his horse by the bridle. The people gave way, and he marched up with his horse to the foot of the tribunal, when a shout of admira-

tion arose from the crowd, and then a profound silence reigned. The censor asked, "Pompey the Great, have you served all the campaigns required by law?" With a loud voice he answered, "I have served them all; and all, under myself, as general." This man shall turn Judea's fate.

Once when very sick, his physician ordered him to obtain a thrush. His servants could find none in the markets. He was told that Lucullus had them all the year round in his bird-houses. "But," said he, "does Pompey's life depend on the luxuries of Lucullus?" This general Lucullus introduced Pompey into the regions of Asia, to conquer the East, while Julius Cæsar was subduing the West and the North.

Lucullus was sent to fight against one of the most powerful kings of Asia, named Tigranes. This man styled himself "King of kings!" and when he made public dinners he compelled eight kings, whom he had conquered, to stand as slaves around his table. When he rode, two kings ran on foot on each

side of his horse. How different is this from Him, who is truly the King of kings, and lord of lords! He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." His people shall sit with him in his glory.

This haughty monarch heard that Lucullus was coming, and said of his small forces, in a jest to his own courtiers, "If they come as ambassadors, they are a great many; but if as enemies, they are very few." When the battle was begun, he mistook the movements of the Romans, and exclaimed, as if in sport, "See! those invincible legions can run away!" But his jests were soon dropped, for he lost all presence of mind, and fled, losing almost his entire army. Lucullus was not an able general, and Pompey soon came to be the leader of the army in Asia. He took possession of Syria, and thus an end was put to the empire which had so long oppressed Judea. The Romans assumed the right of interfering in the affairs of all nations, and Pompey was not slow to act upon this principle. He made Scaurus the lieutenant-gover-

nor over Syria, and sent him down to seize Damascus, and, no doubt, told him to gain Judea if he could.

It was known in Jerusalem that Scaurus was coming into the land, and each party hastened to send ambassadors to win his favour. Aristobulus offered him four hundred talents if he would render him aid, and the bid of the opposing faction was raised to the same amount. The rapacious general hesitated; but as Aristobulus held the temple and all its treasures, he took sides with him, for he was likely to be the best paymaster. Aretas was ordered to break up the siege; the Arabian dared not refuse. As the army was retreating, the favoured prince collected all the forces he could muster, and chased the foe with great losses on the part of the insurgents. The result was sickening to Hyrcanus; he wished himself again in the solitude of a peaceful citizen. But the fiery ambition of his instigator was not cooled; Antipater had other plans.

Pompey soon arrived at Damascus, having

brought low the proudest monarch of the East. Why should not Pompey be the proudest conqueror! Kings vied with each other, in doing him homage, and were almost willing to serve at his table. His favour must be bought, or his hand would crush their power. Splendid presents were made; the king of Egypt gave a golden crown worth four thousand pieces of gold, and Aristobulus sent a golden vine worth four hundred talents, which was afterwards placed in the temple of Jupiter at Rome, and admired as a noble specimen of Jewish art.

The Jews would never have asked Pompey to settle their troubles, had not each party been anxious to secure his awful power against the other. Messengers came from every faction. And if there had not been a government to seize, no doubt Pompey would have treated them very much as Gallio did the apostle Paul and his accusers at a later day, saying, "If you contend about words, names, and religious questions, I will be no judge of such matters." He consented to hear

them, caring less for a just settlement of their troubles, than for taking advantage of them, and gaining their land. He prepared to give the kingdom to Hyrcanus, whose cause the wily Antipator set forth in the fairest light, for the weakness of the man would make him an easy prey. But he had more to fear from Aristobulus, if he decided against him, for he had power on his side, and could block up his way, so that his conquest of Arabia and Egypt would become very difficult. He therefore gave fair words to both parties, promising to come, in person, into Judea, and compose their differences.

It was not difficult for Aristobulus to read the intentions of Pompey. He went home in anger and fear, put the country in a state of defence, and suspecting what sort of a visit the powerful Roman intended to make, prepared for his reception. All this inflamed the mind of Pompey, and he made an entrance into Judea. The Jewish prince shut himself up in a castle on one of the high mountains near the frontier. After much parleying,

several personal interviews, and many useless efforts to understand each other, he was compelled to sign written orders for the delivering up of all his castles to Pompey. But when out of the Roman's power he rebelled against his own act. The disgrace of surrendering the whole country into foreign hands, was intolerable; the weakness, which made resistance foolish, vexed his bold and enterprising spirit. It was a terrible hour for a prince who had any love for his country, with a temple which the heathen might plunder, altars which they would desecrate, a religion they would despise, and a people they would reduce to a national slavery. Submission was ruin; war was fatal. Had the ancient faith in God secured the confidence in Him by which their fathers triumphed, the Jews might have stood firm and resisted the enemy. Jehovah would have fought their battles, and been their shield, their fortress, and their high tower. Aristobulus resolved to risk a war. He cancelled the orders for the surrender of the castles, bade the garrisons defend themselves or

die, and fleeing to Jerusalem, prepared for a siege.

For the first time a Roman army was in Judea, and the soldiers were filled with admiration, when they saw the beautiful groves of palm, and the gardens of balsam-shrubs, which adorned the country. Aristobulus, trembling in terror of the conquering hosts, and finding the city too much divided to make a firm resistance, hastened to meet Pompey, and avert the desolation of the land. He offered a large sum of money, and the surrender of the capital. Gabienus was sent forward to take possession. But the bolder part of the inhabitants rose up, closed the gates, and manned the walls. Gabienus could neither force the gates nor find any money. The people told him from the walls, that they would not be bound by any treaties of the prince.

Care had not been taken by Aristobulus to get out of the hands of Pompey, and now he was put in chains and threatened with death. The party of Hyrcanus gained strength, opened the gates, and welcomed

the invader. The other party shut themselves up in the strong enclosures of Mount Zion, and destroyed the bridges which were built over the deep ditches, dug at a former siege. The attack was begun in earnest, bringing engines of war from Tyre. For three months the work was urged on with Roman skill and vigour. But on a Sabbath the besieged priests and people refused to stir a hand to prevent the enemy from erecting new works, or to destroy their batteries, and the Romans filled up the ditches and raised their engines where they could not be resisted. The wall was broken, the enemy rushed in, and a carnage followed of the most heart-rending nature. Jew murdered Jew, and Pharisees took dire revenge on Sadducees. The priests, however, as if undisturbed by the awful scenes around the temple, remained at their altars, engaged in the worship of Jehovah. They chose the sword rather than flight, and resolved to die at their posts; a fact which Pompey praised as worthy of all admiration, and without a parallel in the whole world. Even in these

times of degeneracy there were some devoted men of God. Here is one break in the cloud which obscures the setting sun, and true religion clearly shines forth over the altar.

Pompey and his chief officers entered the temple. Not content with viewing the outer courts, they passed through the holy place, with an eye upon the massive gold forming the golden table, and golden candlesticks, and upon the great stores of costly frankincense. He saw the two thousand talents in the treasury, but he laid not his hand upon these immense riches. The work of plundering temples was one motive of ancient wars, but Pompey left the wealth of the temple untouched, an act supposed to be not only generous and noble, but politically wise.

He entered into the Holy of Holies; a most sacred place forbidden to all men except the high-priest, and he entered it but once a year. Probably there was no one to hinder his entrance, for the priests who had held the temple were now the expelled party, and the others were so elated with their victory over

Aristobulus that they would deny Pompey nothing. Great was his astonishment, says Tacitus, when he saw in this mysterious sanctuary no statue, nor form of an idol, nor symbol of the Deity, to whom it was consecrated. The reflecting Jews could never forgive Pompey this act of impiety, and they held the opinion that from this time forward he ceased to be as successful as he had always been before; a remarkable fact indeed, attested by the history of that age.

Pompey gave orders that the temple be purified from the carnage of his soldiers, and that services be renewed. Aristobulus was reserved to be carried with his family to Rome, and Hyrcanus was appointed high-priest, and prince of the Jews, but was forbidden to wear the diadem. Antipater now gained his heart's desire, by obtaining the place of counsellor, and really exercising the chief authority. The tribute was laid upon the city, the walls thrown down, and the dominions of Hyrcanus limited to Judea proper, leaving him a broken kingdom with no army

and few strong defences. No more was liberty to rise upon that nation. Its sun had set, with little light to gild the temple roof, or shine on the Hebrew mountains.

The heart of the Roman conqueror was set on having a grand triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He was gratified. In his glittering chariot rode the victor. Three hundred and twenty-four captives of the highest rank walked before him in the procession. How could he rejoice in thus torturing their feelings! Among these royal captives was Aristobulus and his family. The spoils were vast. Millions had been taken by war. Is not this rapine of war robbery? Does fighting excuse stealing? He had taken fifteen kingdoms, eight hundred cities, and reduced one thousand castles! What a bruising and breaking to pieces by one general!

There is a far nobler triumph than this to be celebrated by us every day, if we will conquer ourselves, and bring all our thoughts and affections in obedience to Christ. There is a king in our own hearts to be subdued, and he

is our pride. There is a castle to reduce and that is the heart. There is a city to besiege night and day, and that is the "town of Mansoul." Here is an army to conquer, composed of thousands of thoughts, imaginations, and purposes. The greatest battlefield in which we are called to fight, is in our own souls. We need the energy of a Pompey, and the spirit of the humblest saint. An old writer happily says, "Rest not in an ovation, but triumph over thy passions. Let anger walk hanging down the head: let malice go manacled, and envy fettered after thee. Behold, within thee, the long train of thy trophies; not without thee. Chain up the unruly legion of thy breast. Lead thine own captivity captive, and be Cæsar unto thyself." Yes, be the good soldier of Jesus Christ under the great Captain of your salvation, who is leading many sons to glory.

There were two captives fortunate enough not to be exposed to the insult of adorning a victor's rejoicing, for they had escaped. One was Mithridates, whose throne, sceptre, im-

mense treasures, and family, were borne in the procession. The other was a son of Aristobulus, who on the humiliating journey to Rome escaped. He was the oldest son, Alexander. He possessed the active courage of his father, and soon gathered a considerable army. After several fruitless attempts to recover a part of the kingdom, his father and brother, having escaped from Rome, joined him. They raised the standard of revolt, but in vain. Their forces were dispersed, and Aristobulus, after being severely wounded, was carried back in chains to Rome. His children were set free, for their mother secured their ransom by ordering all the fortresses to be surrendered to the Romans. The country was kept under Roman soldiers until Jerusalem was finally destroyed, after our Lord had taught in her streets, preached in her temple, wept over her people, and predicted her utter desolation.

Marcus Crassus now appears. His heart was set on wealth, that he might live in the highest style of Roman extravagance. In

Rome he raised a private fire company of five hundred men, and when a house was on fire, he would buy it, and those joining it, at a very cheap rate. Then his men would put out the fire, repair the buildings, and on the sales he would make a fine speculation. One day he was told "Pompey the Great is coming," and he replied with a sneer, "How big is he?" Yet he, Cæsar, and Pompey, held sway over Rome. When told that he was to be sent into Syria, his joy was excessive. His design was to excel his predecessor and have a grander triumph at the expense of the temples he might plunder, and the humbled kings he might lead in his train.

Crassus entered Jerusalem, to the alarm of all who knew his thirst for plunder. Eleazar was treasurer of an immense wealth. It had been long accumulating. The Jews in all foreign lands had sent their yearly donations, or tythes to the temple. Many Gentiles had contributed large sums. Cicero had urged a law against thus draining the land of gold! Among other treasures was a splen-

did bar of pure gold. The treasurer had surrounded this with wood, so that it looked like a beam, and was used for supporting one of the curtains of the Holy of Holies. To appease the covetousness of the Roman, he offered him this marvellous beam of gold. But when was ever avarice appeased? The rapacious general felt his appetite the more keenly whetted for plunder. Though he made oath not to violate the holy temple, he ransacked it, emptied the treasury, robbed the Lord's house of the sacred furniture, and yet was not ready to say, "It is enough!" For he pillaged heathen temples without the slightest conscience. At last he died by the hands of an Arab chief, who filled his mouth with melted gold, in mockery of his avarice, and sent the head to his king. Thus his ruling passion was rebuked in his death. He reaped what he had sown.

Jerusalem is yet to attract the conqueror of Pompey. A show is amusing the people of Ravenna, in Italy. One man asks his friends to excuse him for a short time, for he

has received news which put all his thoughts in wildest commotion. He leaves the show, mounts his horse, and rides out of town. At the break of day he reaches the camp where his soldiers are resting, by a famous little river. He is greatly troubled. Without dismay he had met the fiercest barbarians of Europe, but now he is about to open a war against some of the rulers of his own loved Rome. The chilling thought of waging a civil war almost stupefies him. He checks his horse from plunging into the stream, trembles, hesitates, knows not what to do. He reins his steed, and rides up and down the banks in anxious thought. "Pompey," says he, "forces me to be the hammer or the anvil. If I cross, I shall destroy my country; if I do not cross, I am lost myself." He hears the tramp of the advancing legion, and declares, "The die is cast," and boldly dashes across the river. This is Cæsar crossing the Rubicon. Every man has his Rubicon to cross—it is the time between hesitation and a firm resolution.

For months he pursues Pompey to destroy him, and wrest kingdoms out of his hands. Many a bloodless victory does he gain, for the people submit at his coming. The fate of Judea is in trembling suspense. It has seemed destined to become the battle-ground between the revengeful Roman generals, each of whom has felt that the other must die by his own hands. Cæsar, now master of Rome, releases Aristobulus, in hope of making good use of him in Judea, but Pompey's soldiers put him to death. Scipio had his gallant son Alexander publicly executed at Antioch. Antipater, the master of Hyrcanus, retains the sovereignty, and courts the favour of Cæsar, for he must now leave old friends for new, in order to avoid destruction. This masked king—the power behind a weak throne—greatly aids Cæsar against his rival, by his heroic actions. By persuading Hyrcanus, the high-priest, to write letters, or by forging them, he induces all the Jews to look to Cæsar for protection, and enlist in an army to aid his cause. These Jewish troops save

his army from defeat in one of his battles in Egypt.

The Jewish people were confirmed in their conviction of the especial protection of God, by the singular fact, that the worst enemies of their nation seemed to be marked for disgrace and a terrible fall. Crassus robbed their holy temple, and died by his love of plunder. As if to embalm him with gold, it was poured hot into his mouth after death. Gabienus turned the hinge of his career by his injustice to the Hebrews, and rapidly declined in honour and power. Pompey, who opened the way for the long succession of Herods, was hunted through the whole civilized world, was disgraced until he felt himself an outcast in the earth, and was killed by Egyptian treachery, when his murderers thought the barbarous deed would best secure to them the good-will of Cæsar. And lo! Cæsar, after all his hot chase and his war to the knife, in driving Pompey to this wretched destruction, bursts into tears at the report of the murder, remembers his rival only as his old friend, and

the husband of his much loved daughter, puts the assassins to death, and honours him in the highest style of Roman burial. Then he describes his rapid marches and triumphs by saying in boastful language at Rome, *veni, vidi, vici*—*I came, I saw, I conquered!*

It is strange that the Jewish nation would be in terror of such a man, lest when he put his foot in Judea, the land would quake. The cunning Antipater had secured his favour, nor did Cæsar forget to reward him. Hyrcanus was established as the high-priest, and prince of the Jews, with the promise that the office should descend through his family for ever. Antipater, who had cleared the perilous way for Hyrcanus, was made a Roman citizen and appointed the Procurator of Judea, and he soon divided the kingdom into two districts, setting his son Phasael over the one, and Herod over the other. The decree of Cæsar was written on brazen tablets, in Greek and Latin, and hung up in the capitol at Rome, and in the temples of Asia. The world should know that Judea had fallen. Her sun was

set. A little light should shine from her altars, and a few stars glitter in her darkened sky, before the wondrous words should be written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and placed on the cross, "This is Jesus the king of the Jews."

Justice kindled a glaring light in two great cities, in the very time that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored. In Rome, Cæsar was stabbed at the foot of a colossal statue of Pompey, as if the blood of his murdered rival still called for the vengeance of God. In Jerusalem as dark a tragedy took place. Antipater was poisoned to death in the palace of Hyrcanus, whom he had made the tool for shaping his ambitious career. He had sharpened the knife for his own destruction. Thus wicked conspirators were made the sword of the Lord against those who had exhausted his long-suffering toward them. "Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

Herod now comes into power, making the most wicked deeds his steps to that throne on which he sits as "king of the Jews." He is

soon at war with Hyrcanus and the Pharisees. The son does not always respect the tools by which his father has made his fortune ; and so Hyrcanus is despised. But the weak and peaceably disposed high-priest gives him his grand-daughter, the beautiful Jewish maiden Mariamne, in marriage, whom Herod accepts, not so much from love, as from the policy of thus inheriting the throne. The Pharisees, however, are not satisfied. They hunt up Antigonus, a son of Aristobulus II., and placing him at their head, they revolt, and bring in the Parthians to invade Judea. Herod flies to Rome for help. The rebels put Phasaël in prison, where he dashes out his brains against a wall, and is thus out of Herod's way. They seize Hyrcanus, cut off his ears, so that he can never be high-priest again, and thus clear the way for Herod's design. (See Lev. xxi. 16-24.) The Roman senate, before which Herod pleads with all his power, makes him king of Judea, and he gives the high-priesthood to his brother-in-law, Aristobulus, a lovely boy of seventeen years, whom the people greatly love.

- But woe to the young high-priest, if he is in Herod's hands !*

Herod found Jerusalem barred against him, by Antigonus, the Parthians, and the Pharisees. He took it by storm after a siege of half a year. The Roman soldiers entered the gates and gave loose to all the basest fury and passion, which had been pent up for months. Their pillage and murder put even Herod to shame. He complained that they were going to leave him king in a desert. To please the Jews and keep a treasury for himself, he carefully protected the temple, paying the Romans large money to let it stand unharmed.

The attachment of the Jews to the Asmonean family had been strong, and Herod feared lest they might grow weary of him and restore some of the relatives of the excellent Mariamne. Hence he could not rest until this entire family were destroyed. Even the last noble descendent, his own queen Mariamne,

* For some notice of Herod, see "The Holy Child," published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication.

fell the victim of his terrible jealousy. It becomes us to linger somewhat upon the character, misfortunes, and death of this princess through whom the sceptre departed from Judah, and passed into the hands of Herod the tyrant. In the heartless destruction of her and her sons, we see the extinction of the Maccabees.

Of the early life of Mariamne we are left almost in ignorance. She is often mentioned as the daughter of Hyrcanus, who was really her grandfather. Her father was Alexander, the gallant chieftain who was put to death by Scipio. Her mother was Alexandra, whose intrigues served to hasten the tragedy which involved her entire family in utter ruin. Mariamne, at first, appears as a beautiful star, occasionally seen through the black clouds that are gathering over the land of her fathers, and the ever-loved Jerusalem, whose glory is swiftly departing. While a princess in her grandfather's house, she, doubtless, deserved the high praises bestowed upon her character by the Jewish historians, when they describe

her as beautiful in person, accomplished in education, brilliant in conversational powers, dignified in her manners, and conspicuous for her patriotism and her piety.

We almost wonder how she was ever persuaded to give her hand to Herod, for he was not only a foreigner, but a political adventurer too unscrupulous to be trusted. Her marriage is an evidence of the moral degradation to which her people were reduced, for the rulers were ready to sacrifice principle to the apparent necessities of national policy. But the character of Herod did not appear so forbidding in her eyes as in ours. He must have been presented to her as a prince of lofty bearing and commanding talents. Success seemed to wait on all his designs. Neighbouring kings admired and envied his good fortune, or rather the masterly ability with which he overcame the greatest obstacles, and continued advancing in the career of prosperity and power. Perhaps she was fascinated with the hope of queenly glory, and imagined for herself a future of grandeur and renown.

She could not foresee that the magnificence of Herod's public life would be strangely contrasted with the dark tragedy of his domestic history. She could not anticipate how the most miserable peasant might consider himself happy in his hut, when he heard stories of her wretchedness in a palace filled with dissension, crime, and bloodshed.

It is more than likely, however, that her leading motive was neither affection nor ambition. It was simply policy; and for the apparent welfare of her family and her people, she submitted to become the wife of Herod. Like the noble Margaret of Navarre, she had a widowed mother, destitute of religious principle, and easily captivated by the false appearances of crafty policy, and Alexandra may have suggested that Herod's wrath against Hyrcanus might be appeased. She was given in marriage, as a sort of peace-offering to Herod, when he was threatening the national party with war. Thus the lamb was surrendered to the wolf, to be sacrificed when he should demand a fresh victim.

Her life at court was one of constant trouble and bitterness. It was sorrowful enough when Herod was at home, but in his absence—and he was absent a large share of his time—it was even worse. For it was impossible to escape the jealousies of Salome, the sister of Herod, and the snares of her mother, the unprincipled Alexandra.

One of her first great sorrows was caused by the cruelty with which her grandfather, Hyrcanus, was treated. He was seized by the Parthians, when they were expelled from Judea, and led captive into their own land. This, no doubt, was a source of delight to Herod, for he was thus rid of the man who had a right to the priesthood. Josephus tells us of the cruel mercies of Herod, as follows :

“ When Hyrcanus was brought into Parthia, the king Phraates treated him after a very gentle manner, as having already learned of what an illustrious family he was ; on which account he set him free from his bonds, and gave him a habitation at Babylon, [a new city, probably near the old site,]

where there were Jews in great numbers. These Jews honoured Hyrcanus as their high-priest and king, as did all the Jewish nation that dwelt beyond the Euphrates, which respect was very much to his satisfaction. But when he was informed that Herod had received the kingdom, new hopes came upon him, as having been himself still of a kind disposition towards him; and expecting that Herod would bear in mind what favour he had received from him; for when he (Herod) was upon his trial, and when he was in danger that a capital sentence would be pronounced against him, he delivered him from that danger, and from all punishment.

“Accordingly he talked of that matter with the Jews that came often to him, with great affection; but they endeavoured to retain him among them, putting him in mind of the kind offices and honours they did him, and that those honours were not at all inferior to what they could pay to either their high-priests or their kings; and what was a greater motive to determine him, they said, was this, that he

could not have those dignities [in Judea] because of the maiming of his body; also that kings do not use to requite men for those kindnesses which they received when they were private persons, the height of their fortune making usually no small changes in them.

“Now, although they suggested these arguments to him for his own advantage, yet did Hyrcanus still desire to depart. Herod also wrote him, and persuaded him to desire of Phraates and the Jews that were there, that they should not grudge him the royal authority which he should have jointly with himself,” for now was the proper time for Herod to make amends for the favours he had received from Hyrcanus. He sent a messenger to King Phraates with many presents, asking him “in the most obliging way that he should be no hindrance to his gratitude towards his benefactor.”

Hyrcanus was supplied with money by the Jews, and he returned to Herod, who “received him with all possible respect, and gave him the upper place at public meetings, and

set him above all the rest at feasts, and thereby deceived him. He called him his father, and endeavoured by all ways possible, that he might have no suspicion of any treacherous design against him."

The priesthood, however, was not restored to Hyrcanus. Nor did Herod show the least disposition to recognize Aristobulus, the brother of Mariamne, in that office. And as if to mock the Jews, Herod sent to Babylon, and brought thence an obscure priest, and bestowed the high-priesthood upon him! This man was Ananel, who had been of old a particular friend of Herod, and was therefore willing to obey his master's nod, and further all his political plans. The appointment of this man was a bitter offence to Alexandra. She wrote to the famed and infamous Cleopatra of Egypt to assist her in securing the high-priesthood for her son. Meanwhile Mariamne urged her brother's cause, and Herod was induced to take the office from Ananel and bestow it upon Aristobulus.

This, however, did not satisfy Alexandra,

and in order to put a check upon her demands, Herod forbade her to meddle with public affairs. Her guards, also, were so careful that nothing that she did could easily be concealed. These hardships put her out of patience, and inflamed her hatred, for she preferred "to undergo anything rather than be deprived of her liberty of speech, and under the notion of an honorary guard, to live in a state of slavery and terror." She complained to Cleopatra, and received the advice to take her son, Aristobulus, and come at once into Egypt. She devised a strange method of escape. Two coffins were to be made. Into one she was to put herself, and into the other her son. The coffins were to be carried in the night to the sea-side, and thence shipped in a vessel ready for the purpose. But her plan was discovered and frustrated. Herod passed by her offence, even while meditating revenge. He fully resolved to put the young high-priest out of the way by desperate means.

At the feast of tabernacles, Aristobulus,

now in his seventeenth year, ministered in his office, and the people were delighted. Because he seemed to be "exceeding comely, and taller than men usually were at that age, and to exhibit in his countenance a great deal of that high family from which he was sprung, a warm zeal and affection towards him appeared among the people, and the memory of the actions of his grandfather, Aristobulus, was fresh in their minds; and their affections got so far the mastery over them that they could not forbear to show their inclinations towards him." Herod took the alarm, and, after the feast, took Aristobulus to Jericho and had him drowned! The office of high-priest was then given to Ananel.

The Jewish people were enraged, and Herod pretended great grief for the death of his brother-in-law, attempting to divert the popular indignation by a splendid funeral. But the people were not so easily deceived, nor was Alexandra pacified. She sent an account of the murder to Cleopatra, who espoused her cause with the warmth of a woman and a mo-

ther ; not without the ambitious hope of securing Judea as a valuable province of Egypt. The ruin of Herod seemed almost certain, for he was threatened by the power of Mark Antony, who was then willing to do anything to promote the wishes of Cleopatra.

Herod determined to go boldly to Antony, awaken their former friendship, and try the effect of immense bribes. He entrusted to his uncle Joseph not only his government, but his incomparable Mariamne. He knew not what might be his own fate, and he gave a secret order, that if he should be condemned to die, his wife should at once be put to death. Joseph told Mariamne of this order, and when Herod returned, she asked, whether, if he really loved her, he would have given that fatal order for her death ! Herod sprang up in fury. His worst suspicions were aroused. He would have slain her on the spot, but her beauty, even then, disarmed him. He seemed to forgive her, and she, in the strangeness of a true wife's confidence, pardoned, and loved him, in spite of all his cruelties. But he put

Joseph to death, and imprisoned Alexandra, with every mark of insult.

Herod had gained his point with Antony, but at the celebrated battle of Actium, Antony was conquered, and now Herod must make peace with the conqueror, Octavius Cæsar, afterwards the renowned Augustus. He prepared for a journey to Rhodes where he would meet the young Roman general. One thing must be done before he left his throne—the old Hyrcanus, now eighty years of age, must be destroyed. The documents in the royal archives of Herod accused the poor old man of treasonable conduct, and it has been supposed that the charges were invented by the king. At all events Hyrcanus was put to death by violence. Herod committed Mariamne and her mother to watchful hands, with the renewed order, that in case of his own death, his queen should be despatched! He appeared before Cæsar, gained his cause, and returned. Again had Mariamne learned the horrible secret relating to herself, and she met him with repulsive in-

dignation. She accused him of the many murders he had committed in her family, until he could no longer endure to be rebuked for his barbarous conduct. His sister, Salome, watched every opportunity of inflaming the suspicions and the anger of her brother, and at length Mariamne was brought before the court, whose judges were too much in dread of the royal vengeance to render a just decision. They sentenced her to be executed. And yet Herod scarcely dared to issue the death warrant. He hesitated, wished to change the sentence, and commit her to prison. But his mother and sister so worked upon his moody and violent temper that he gave way, and issued the fatal order of death. And then, to the horror of the spectators, her own mother, Alexandra, assailed the wretched but innocent queen. Perhaps Herod compelled her to this inhuman conduct, or she may have thought that appearing as the enemy of her daughter, she would be spared as the friend of the king. Mariamne passed on in silence, with the dignity of conscious

virtue; and though deeply wounded at her mother's barbarity, she would not condescend to betray her emotion. She calmly and heroically met her death as one altogether worthy of the noble house from which she was descended. And still Herod thirsted for the blood of the Maccabees. His mother-in-law, ever restless and intriguing, was accused of plotting dangerous schemes, and executed. To favour the Asmonean party was a capital offence. Costobaras, the husband of Salome, was charged with having concealed certain noble men belonging to the Asmonean party, and sentence of death was passed upon them and their protector. Salome was the informer; and judging from her talent for inventing false charges, she may have contrived the whole story. Josephus tells us that Herod "sent men to the place where he had the intimation they were concealed, and ordered both them and those that were accused as guilty with them to be slain; insomuch that there were now none at all left of the kindred of Hyrcanus; and the kingdom was entirely in

Herod's own power, and there was nobody remaining of such dignity as could put a stop to what he did against the Jewish laws."

An awful malady fell upon Herod soon after the death of his queen, and a great pestilence fell upon the people. The more pious Jews considered it a judgment on account of the murder of the last of the beloved Asmonæan family. The nation had departed from God, and war, famine, pestilence, and foreign rule, were among the just judgments which had been foretold as a warning against national sins.

Two young men remained, who were to be reckoned among the kindred of Hyrcanus. These were Alexander and Aristobulus, the eldest sons of Mariamne and of Herod. Every pains was taken by their father to keep them from acquiring Jewish doctrines and customs. They were sent to Rome to be educated. They were received into the palace of Augustus, and treated with great care and distinction. Herod was proud of them, and if the Jews should hate them for their Roman manners

and heathen religion, he would be the more pleased. Had they lived, one of them might have been in the place of Archelaus, who succeeded his father when the holy child Jesus was an exile in Egypt. But the Asmonean blood in their veins seemed to be a fatal crime in the eyes of their father.

When they returned to Jerusalem they were received by the Jewish people with general enthusiasm. Their grace, their beauty, their affable manners, and above all, their Maccabean blood, endeared them to the whole Hebrew nation. They married, and assumed the position of princes. Salome, the mother-in-law of Aristobulus, was one of the first to sicken at their praises. Guilty, and conscience-smitten, because of her part in the murder of their mother, Mariamne, she began to fear that they would take revenge when they should come into power. She watched their visitors, and turned her quick ear to every idle wind that might bring her the whispers of accusing lips. They perhaps spoke without much prudence or reserve,

about their mother's fate. Rumours began to rise. Salome added to them, until it was announced abroad, that they had declared themselves the future avengers of their mother's death.

For three years, Herod, for a wonder, did not give his usual heed to these insinuations, for he was proud of the popularity of his sons. But after a while he was open to suspicion. Hatred took the place of paternal affection, and with Herod hatred was murder. After much intrigue, he arraigned his sons before the emperor Augustus. He acted as the accuser, the witness, and the pleader against them. They stood silent, for they were shocked at the dreadful charge of being obstinate, and of conspiring against the king's life. They could not exculpate themselves, without charging and heaping crimes upon their cruel and suspicious father, and this they had not the heart to do. Their silence, their modest and innocent conduct, and their pitiable situation, excited the deepest interest in their favour. Augustus had compassion

on them, and besought the accuser to be reconciled to his children. Herod returned with them to Jerusalem.

Peace and love were not, however, restored. The sons of Mariamne were every day accused of new plots. "The whole court became a scene of gloom, suspicion, and distrust. Friend shrunk from friend; every society swarmed with spies; men accused each other from personal and private grounds of animosity." If the princes sought the company of the king, they were suspected of evil plots; if they stood aloof, they were charged with disloyalty. All those who had at any time shown favour or attachment to the suspected sons of Mariamne, although they were the king's most firm and loyal friends, fell at once into disgrace. The servants of the princes were plied with questions, put to the rack, and so tortured that some show of proof was extorted from them. Alexander was imprisoned, and loaded with chains, until his father-in-law interposed and obtained his liberty. Other attempts were made to convict the princes,

until at last they were unjustly tried, condemned, and strangled in Samaria. Either on this, or on a similar occasion, Augustus uttered the bitter sarcasm, that he would rather be one of Herod's swine (*sus*) than his son (*suus*).

No Maccabean prince now remained in whom the Jews could hope for relief from national bondage. Herod had extinguished the family, and after his wretched death, he left his government to those of Herodian blood. Shortly after Archelaus came to his throne he had reason to know something of the magic of the Maccabean name, for his rest was disturbed by a pretender who seemed to have fair claims to his kingdom. An artful and ambitious youth came forward as Alexander, the son of Mariamne, declaring that he had escaped the executioner, and had kept himself hidden until his father should be in his grave. So cleverly did he personate Alexander, and so much did he look like him, that many believed his story, and the whole nation was ready to welcome a ruler of the Asmonean

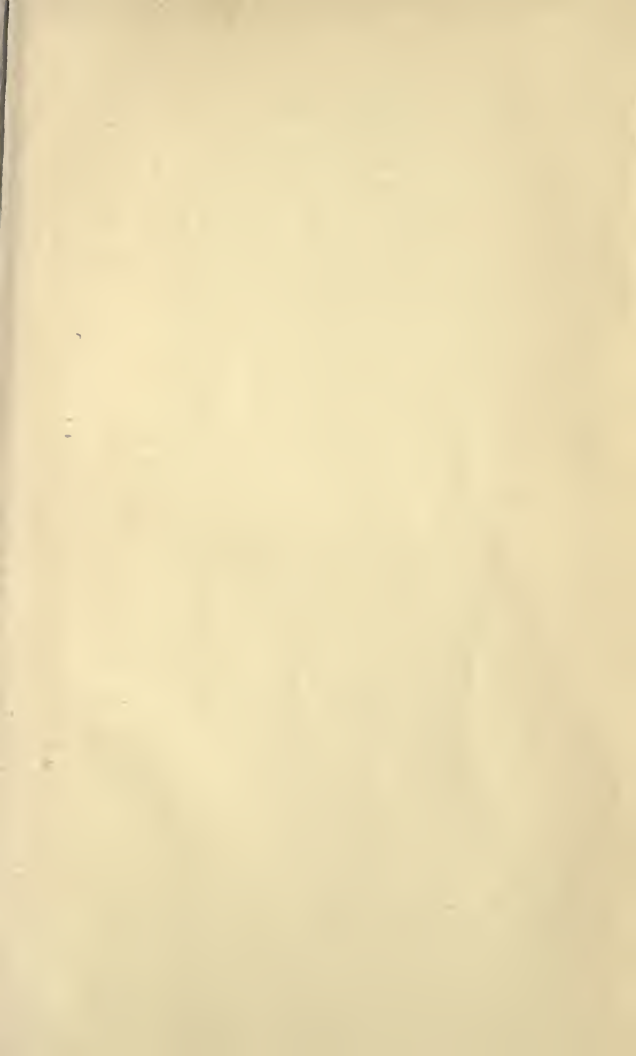
race. He was liberally furnished with money, and boldly set out for Rome, to demand the kingdom from the emperor Augustus. The Jews crowded forth to meet him, and escorted him into the city with loudest shouts of joy. The emperor had a freedman at court, who was once familiarly acquainted with the sons of Mariamne, and when sent to examine the claimant, he was so imposed upon, that he declared that he was the veritable Alexander. The emperor was not so easily deceived. The pretender came before him, and he found that his hands were hard and horny, and that his whole person lacked the softness of the royal youth. Augustus led him into a private room, and there promised him pardon if he would speak the truth. The presence-chamber of so clear-sighted and powerful a monarch was no place for deception, and the false Alexander confessed his crime. The emperor forgave the pretended Asmonean the penalty of death, but seeing that he was a strong and dangerous man, he sent him to the hard toil of the galleys. Thus he was punished, the people

were disappointed, and Archelaus held the kingdom.

Moral night rests on the Hebrew mountains. A few stars shine. Hillel, and Shammai, the father of Gamaliel, are held in veneration as teachers of the law. Simeon is maturing in the piety and hopeful faith of his fathers, preparing to take the infant Saviour in his arms when the morning Sun of Righteousness shall arise. Anna, the prophetess, (teacher) is devoted to the worship of Jehovah, and thirty years hence, shall rejoice in the assurance of redemption's dawn. There are doubtless many true children of God, whose gentle light shines in the darkness, but like the seven thousand true worshippers in Elijah's day, they are mostly nameless ones in Israel. Zacharias and Elizabeth are among them. Joseph and Mary are but children, being educated in the faith of their fathers. The devout servants of God find much to lament, and can only rest in hope. It is night with them, and yet there are dews of grace upon them ; and how glad will their hearts be

when able to say, over the tidings of a Saviour's birth, "The day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace."

THE END.



HJews

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Blackburn, William Maxwell

Judas the Maccabee and the Asmonean
princes

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